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This Do In Remembrance
—Of Me.—



"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"

A COLLECTION OF COMMUNION SERMONS

BY

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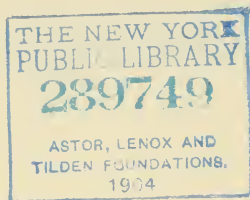
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of Springfield, Ohio.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

In compliance with the request of the manager of the German Literary Board, the writer takes pleasure in furnishing the introductory foreword. In the religious literature of the day one encounters much about present day preaching, up-to-date preaching, and the adjustment of preaching to the alleged advanced spirit of the times in which we live. But it should never be forgotten that if christianity is to work in and through men for its own higher ends, that the real gospel of the Son of God must not be supplanted by any bogus gospel that is not and never can be made the gospel from Heaven. If the Son of God is to be manifested forth in the message of the duly accredited ambassador then certainly the sermon maker must not in his discourse thrust upon the people some sophisticated Barabbas. Pascal, a man of no ordinary insight into truth, divided preachers into two classes, those who belong to the order of intellect and those who belong to the order of love. If the object of the sermon is to make men know God and love him, then the discourses in this volume belong to the latter class. The true spiritual content is to be found in them. The author has simply given to scripture its natural force. And this, after all that may be said, is the most natural and forceful method of preaching, for truth that is from God does not change. It is subject to no vicissitudes and no fluctuations. True the law of adaptation must maintain but the wise and effective preacher in conforming to that law, will, as in these ser-

mons avoid gush, pathos and all straining after great rhetorical effects.

There is a Lutheran Homiletic and in these sermons of Dr. Bring, as it seems to the writer, it is finely exemplified. There is about them the ring of a sturdy evangelicism. They lead one into the very heart of the gospel. They have the marks of good preaching. They are simple, lucid, well arranged, devout and eminently scriptural. If didactic utterance is best adapted to the eternal word, then too in these sermons the adaptation is well nigh perfect. Evangelistic preaching is partial, it fails to reach all classes and cannot, if maintained exclusively, permanently hold those whom it does reach. The sermons herein presented are rather of the edifying order. They furnish meat for the new man. May the blessing of the Head of the church, who declared by the word of his Apostle that by "the foolishness of preaching" God would save the world, go with them on their errand of spiritual quickening and edification of such as have believed on the Lord, and have become participants in His grace!

DAVID H. BAUSLIN.

Wittenberg Theological Seminary,
Epiphany Season, 1904.

I.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) II. Cor. VI., 1, 2.

In the fifth chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians the Apostle speaks of reconciling grace: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tresspasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." And he calls himself and his co-workers ambassadors of Christ, who admonish in Christ's stead, or through whom God exhorts and entreats men, "Be ye reconciled to God." Grace could not be more magnificently described. Then immediately thereafter he goes on to say, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Here the discussion is of grace already received, and of its use; for he is speaking of those who had already received the grace of reconciliation. He now turns to them and exhorts them, as co-laborers with God, not to receive such grace in vain, not to neglect it nor let it lie fruitless, but to apply it and make use of it. But at the same time he cannot but place before their eyes again this grace in

*Delivered on Advent Sunday.

its complete grandeur. He calls to their minds a passage from the prophet Isaiah (chapter 49) in which the prophet speaks in the person of the Messiah: "Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God;" then the Lord answers, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee."

It might almost seem as though no grace *for us* were contained in this passage, since it is addressed to the Messiah; but the apostle cites it as a promise for us. And the very fact that it is originally a speech addressed to the Messiah makes it so rich in grace; for this passage does not only apply to his own person, but it also relates to his whole work and insures to the advantage of all in whose behalf he intercedes. "In the intercessory prayer for his disciples and for all who should believe on him through their words, he has been heard; and that makes our time an accepted time, and our days, days of salvation." In the answering of prayer that belongs to the Lord Jesus, all answer to prayer for us sinners is comprehended; and the help that was given him includes all the help that we sinners need. Because of the fact that such answer to prayer and such help is now at our command, our time of mercy will become an accepted time, and our days, days of salvation.

Is not that a great thing, dear communicants? What an acceptable time is that in which man is heard for the sake of Jesus, what days of salvation those in which man can find pardon! The apostle wishes to admonish us to understand and to consider this when he says, "Behold,

now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Would that we might be aroused by his words!

Such a "Behold" is now called to us especially just at this time, as we are about to enter upon a new church year. Again the Lord gives his Church an accepted time; again days of salvation dawn for us—days on which the Lord comes to us and proclaims a gracious year of the Lord. He comes in his Word and in his sacraments; and these make the time an accepted time and the days, days of salvation.

Especially is every day on which the Lord invites to the holy communion a day of salvation.

That he then comes with his body and blood, is not this a token that help and salvation belong to him, as he pleads our cause? But it is at the same time a token that salvation is ours through him—a token that he will hear and save all who turn to him with the whole heart. Yes, a token that now, here in his holy sacrament, through the communion of his body and blood, he will cause help and salvation to come to all who call upon his name. So we may proclaim to every communicant, "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," and may declare every communion day a day of salvation.

But there is also added the warning not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Even to place one's self under God's law is somewhat humbling; then we must cry out with David, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" But nothing humbles one so completely—supposing it to be the case that we allow ourselves to be altogether humbled—as when we place ourselves under *grace*, that

is, when we consider on the one hand how much grace we have received, and on the other hand how little this grace has accomplished in us. If we must all agree with the words of Bengel "I have experienced so much grace that a thousand Old Adams could have been drowned in it"—what shall we say if not even *one* Old Adam has been drowned, if my Old Adam still bestirs himself so powerfully? How much self-seeking, how much self-love, how much worldly mindedness, how much carnal nature strives against this grace; but, on the other hand, how little spiritual mind and spiritual fruit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance!

If we are so much in arrears, how shall we exculpate ourselves? His grace, in and by itself, is by no means so impotent! No, the fault lies in us. We must say to ourselves, "*We* are to blame, we have received the grace of God in vain"—perhaps not exactly so that this grace has been able to effect nothing at all, but still so that it has not effected so much as it could and would have done.

If, then, as we have seen, the divine grace manifests itself in an especially copious and powerful manner in the holy communion, we should also ask ourselves very especially respecting this and all our communions, "Have not I, too, received the grace of God in vain? have I permitted myself, as I might have done, to be quickened and strengthened by it against all the evil against which I sought help in the Lord's Supper, and against which the Lord has proffered help?" For we cannot deny that the partaking of the sacred feast has often been accompanied for us in the past by incen-

tives to our wills, by warnings to our hearts, by an increasing comprehension of the heavenly treasures that are presented to us in it. But what has come of it all? Have not these impulses, warnings and invitations passed by us so often without leaving a trace? For a while, perhaps several days, we were zealous in our use of the word of God and in prayer; for a short time we held fast to the word of grace that had comforted our hearts; for a time the eye that had been turned to Jesus by the partaking of the holy sacrament remained fixed upon him; but soon we sank back into unbelief and self-righteousness. We armed ourselves in some degree against these evils, and against this or that sin which the Spirit of God had revealed to us; but soon the struggle was over, and the sin as unchecked as ever. Ah, is not that receiving the grace of God in vain?

This at least must humble everyone, and bow him low in the dust. But you should not remain away on that account; you would remain away to your own hurt. It shall rather humble you and impel you to call from the depths that the Lord, who giveth grace, will bestow on you grace to remain true to the end. Should not he who hears prayer be willing to hear you in this matter also? Should not he who redeems be willing to redeem you also from the faithlessness that has not properly used his grace?

Now, with the new church year, an accepted time is once more given you; for still does he ever renew his grace. He still gives you days of salvation, communion days. May your first communion day in the new church year be to you a day of salvation. Amen.

II.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zech, IX., 9)

Thus from the mouth of the prophet sounded the message of promise regarding the Zion of God. It came to fulfilment on Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and it is still being fulfilled to-day, especially as often as we again celebrate the Advent. What this verse promises is nothing less than a royal visit, the visit of the King of Zion! It is also no less an occasion when we celebrate the holy communion. The Lord give us peace, that we may clearly understand what such a royal visit means. May he obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit to that end.

“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.” If you have eyes and mind for him, then surely it is a great thing that your Lord and King, your God and Savior comes to you. He comes really and truly, and he comes *to you*; his visit has to do with you; with you he wishes to abide.

“Jesus standeth a thy door,

Offering his grace:

‘In the chambers of thy heart

Find for him a place.’”

Does he not thus knock at your door also, dear soul?
And what kind of a king is this who wishes to visit

*Delivered on Advent Sunday.

you? He is *righteous*. He comes to vindicate his own justice and that of his Father upon earth, in order to establish righteousness, for he "loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness." (Psalms XLV., 8.) "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isaiah XI., 4.) He judges and reproofs all that is sinful; he applies God's law and justice to the sinner's conscience, whereby the sinner may know God's supreme sovereignty and may yield to him when he reproofs through his law, with self-condemnation. Thus he makes the people poor and wretched, thus he arouses a desire for pardon and for righteousness, thus he produces a contrite heart. For that reason did this king, when he came to earth, send John the Baptist before him, to prepare the way for him.

As a righteous one he comes also in the holy communion. Therefore you must approach with a contrite heart, in order to receive him properly when he comes to you. You must first have been reproofed by him and judged on account of your sins, so that you have a genuine desire to forsake them and to become godly.

If it is not thus with you, then the meeting between you and your king will not be conducive to salvation, but to judgment. Therefore scrutinize your hearts and lives and see whether you are willing, in your inmost self, to place yourself on the side of this king, that is, on the side of his righteousness, against *all* sins; whether you are willing to have as your king him who rules in righteousness over you.

Then, too, he comes as a *helper*. "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him

that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy."

Whoever receives him as the righteous one becomes a poor man and needy, wo calls for grace and help. He needs grace *for* his sins, and help *against* his sins, and he has no other helper but this Lord and King. But he is such a helper that the one who has him needs no other: for he is king in the kingdom of God—a royal helper indeed. He has royal pardoning power and royal right. He forgives sins and pardons transgressions. He casts sin behind him and into the depths of the sea, so that it shall be remembered no more. Who shall condemn the one whom he has justified? Moreover, he is also a royal helper against all sins, mighty to save where all help seems to be gone, where sin alone seems to rule.

As such a royal helper does Jesus come in the communion. He comes to you who cry, to you who have no helper. He can and will help you, ye who bear with difficulty your burden of guilt; for is it not more than royal help when he proffers you his body and his blood, and says, "This is my body, that was given for you; this is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins?" Surely that should be sufficient for you. He can and will help you—ye who find it hard to look to him in quiet faith, he will help you to believe. He comes to you and he can and will help you—ye who are in conflict with yourselves, with your hearts, with your thoughts, with your whole evil natures, and who have no helper. And should not he be able to help you? Is the power of sin greater than his? Can you not believe on him? Are you perhaps expecting

too much of him? He that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

He comes, this king, literally *poor*; lowly, afflicted, suffering. The evangelist Matthew, renders the word "meek." So he came here to earth, himself lowly, that he might help the lowly; himself one of the needy, that he might assist the needy; afflicted, that he might show mercy to all who are afflicted; a merciful, and therefore a meek king. This indicates, too, that his way with his followers is a way of suffering. The prophet Zechariah calls upon the daughter of Zion to rejoice and to shout for joy, because his prophecy refers to the time of consummation; the evangelist simply says, "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee," because the time of rejoicing and of shouting for joy was not yet at hand. The inhabitants of Zion were to rejoice over their king, to be sure, but they were also to remember that he proves his kingship by suffering, and that he conducts his own to the end on the way of suffering.

How strongly we are reminded of this when he comes in the communion. Behold, there thy suffering king cometh unto thee! He wishes to take you with him on his way through suffering to glory.

And he comes in *lowliness*. This is seen in the words, "and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This lowliness that surrounded him then and environs him even to-day is the reason that many do not recognize him as king. Ah, how unpretending is the Word in which he comes! Ah, how little of royalty in this communion table, in comparison with a kingly board! Ah, how simply does he make his way also in the hearts of men! Well for you, dear Christian, if you can penetrate this apparent lowliness! Well for you, if (as it is expressed

in the forty-fifth Psalm) you hearken to this king, and consider, and incline your ear to him, and for his sake forget all that you see and hear. Well for you, if this king makes his abode with you; for

“A righteous helper is our God,
And clad in holiness;
Meekness environs his abode,
Mercy his scepter sways;
All our distressed to end he brings,
Therefore with shouts of joy I sing,
Praised be my God,
My Savior strong indeed!”

Hosanna! Lord, help us! O Lord, send good speed! Amen.

III.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” (Titus II., 11-13.)

This passage places before our eyes, as does the whole Advent season, the salutary grace that has been shown to all men in the coming of the Son of God into the world. It also permits us to take a glance at the last revelation of

*Delivered on the second Sunday in Advent.

God, and shows us in what the work of this salvation-bringing grace consists. Such a message especially concerns us when we are preparing to go to the table of the Lord, where he bestows his grace that bringeth salvation.

It is only the grace of God that can save. Sin is a power, the greatest and most terrible power in the world. No human power, however great, can vie with it. Paul, the writer of the passage, had himself learned this by experience, as we may read in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Another power must face the power of sin, if we are to be saved. And such a power of saving grace is manifested in Jesus Christ, the second Adam. "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (Romans V., 17.)

This grace that bringeth salvation is *manifested to all men*. As the sun arises on all, so this salvation has been revealed to all; and, as it applies to all, it is great and powerful enough to really save all who are willing to submit themselves to it. For it indeed depends upon a complete heart submission. We shall therefore consider *from what* this grace will save us, and *to what* it will save us.

It will save us from ungodly and from worldly pleasures. This ungodly living is not only the gross godlessness in an ungodly life, but everything that is unrighteous in the heart, all alienation of the soul from God, all inactivity and indifference in our relations to God, as it appears in disinclination to God, in distraction and absence of mind when we appear before him, in distrust and disobedience. If the godless life appears in alienation from God, worldly lust shows itself in this, that we turn to the

world with delight. The worldly lusts take us prisoners in worldly affairs, so that soon the eyes lust for all that they see; so that the flesh lusts to have its pleasure and its satisfaction in this world; so that in the things of this world we seek our own glory, and take pride in it. This is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Behold this ungodliness and these worldly lusts—they are our destruction. The disease and ruin of our souls has its root in them; they struggle against the soul, and are its death. But grace will rescue us from them; grace is a physician that can and will drive away this evil, these causes of sickness and death that lie in the heart alienated from God and given to the world.

But grace will do still more as a grace that bringeth salvation. It will not only help us in the sickness, but will also assist us in obtaining health, so that we may “live soberly, righteously and godly.” To live *soberly*—that is the first thing that belongs to health of soul, and it includes the idea that our whole life is under the direction and the influence of the fear of God, that it is a life for God and with God. To live *righteously*—that is to give every man what belongs to him, at all times and under all circumstances; to honor and love one’s neighbor in thought, word and deed, and to be indebted to him in nothing. To live *godly*—that is to fear God above all things, to love and trust him with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, so that God will be all in all.

Behold, this is that to which grace will help a poor, lost man, so that he may be able to “look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Is it not a glorious end? are not these great things? They are so great that we must stand amazed at them, and ask, "How can it be? how is it possible?"—that is, if we have comprehended something of the depths of our depravity, and of the loftiness and nobility of such a life in soberness, righteousness and godliness.

A comforting answer to all such questions is given us in the text: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us," etc.; for this passage tells us that what is impossible with men is possible with God; "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom. VIII., 3, 4.) So powerful is the grace of God in Christ that it is able to remove the disease of sin and to bestow life and health. Further, grace can accomplish this singly and alone. It has performed this work of rescue for thousands, as an exemplar to us, so that we, too, when we desire the same salvation, may place our trust in grace alone. But if it is to perform its saving work, it is important that we follow the injunction of Peter, "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I. Peter I., 13.) Yes, it is essential to hold fast to what grace can do, to its power over everything that we discover and observe of the corruption of our hearts.

But according to the words of our text we must also determine to renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts. As soon as the grace of God enters our hearts, it places itself in opposition to ungodliness and worldly lusts and strives

against them. With them grace can never enter into friendship. Therefore the issue depends upon whether a man is willing to practice self-denial and to bid farewell to all carnal things; for otherwise these hinder and check the working of divine grace. For this reason it is very important that you scrutinize your heart and life, and disclose to yourself, through the help of the Holy Spirit, all the godlessness and worldly lusts, in precisely the form in which they appear in you, and that if he does this, you for your part resolve on a willing self-sacrifice and give opportunity for grace to accomplish what it alone can work—your soul's salvation.

We are now in the holy Advent season. We are in the act of considering the precious truth of the salvation-bringing grace of God, that hath appeared to all men; and tomorrow we will hear besides of the blessed hope and manifestation of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. All this strongly admonishes us to take to heart and make plain to ourselves the grace that bringeth salvation, considering from what it will help us, and what it will assist us to obtain. Such an admonition does this hour bring also. We are assembled to become partakers of the saving grace of Christ. With what rich abundance does he meet us here! Yes, it is our Savior himself who comes to us with this grace.

“Jesus has come, the Fountain of mercy,
Come, ye who thirst, and drink, all who will;
Draw from Emmanuel's endless abundance
Healing divine for each ruinous ill.”

Truly, here is the abundance of grace by which you can prevail in life—Jesus Christ. Is it not a powerful grace? is it not powerful against your sins, powerful to

blot them out, powerful to subdue them, powerful to free you from unrighteousness and worldly lusts, powerful to make you once more sober, righteous and godly? Is it not worth fixing your whole hope upon it? yes, is it not a precious grace? Or perchance you do not need it; do you no longer need it? O, my friend, look into your own heart and examine yourself before God: "Is my life a life under discipline, a life before God? Is my life so righteous that I give everyone what is right, always and in all things, in unfeigned love? Is my life godly, not only outwardly and for the sake of appearances, not only in word and in deed, but in spirit and in heart? Is there no ungodliness in me, no disinclination to God and to communion with him? no lukewarmness and indifference, no distraction of the mind and thought? Is there within me no worldly pleasure, love of the world, security, pride, and empty honor?"—How much of all this you will discover if you earnestly examine yourselves! And are you willing to renounce it all, to permit it to be removed and yourself to be helped to that end?

If one has so long heard the message of the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and has already come to God's table as often as have you, should not this saving grace have taught him to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts? Should not this grace have already made you sober, righteous and godly? What is your answer to these questions? Must you not acknowledge that you have permitted ungodliness and worldly lusts to defile your hearts, so that you have not given opportunity for saving grace to effect what it could and would have done? Must you not acknowledge that you have no genuine earnestness in the matter? Or, as your inner disease was re-

vealed to you and you strove to free yourself, did you not then not give opportunity for God's grace, but dissipated time and strength in your own efforts and exertions?

Again an Advent season! Again a Christmas! Again a confession! Again a communion day! Will it now become otherwise? Yes, the Lord is still faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and so cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if we confess our sins. Then bow before him in the dust, and the more deeply you humble yourselves, the more richly will he pour out his blessing upon you. Amen.

IV.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." (II. Cor. IX., 15.)

When mention is made of *one* gift of God, no other can be meant than his Son. He is an unspeakable gift; for as impossible as it is to express what God is, so impossible is it to put into words what his Son is, and what God has given us in him. In him God, in his divine love, has given us everything, even himself. Of this the apostle also says, in another place, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" So we sing, too, in one of our Christmas songs,

*Delivered on the fourth Sunday in Advent.

“How should God now hate us?
Who us gives
What he loves.
Beyond all our measure?
God now gives, to stop our woe,
His own Son
From the throne
Of his might and honor.”

So this Son, with all that he is and all that he brings to us, sinners, is a gift, a free present, which we receive gratuitously; for if it is a gift, it is not earned, else it would be no gift. Thus, too, it is said, “How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” and it is also written, “According as his divine power *hath given* unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue.” (II. Peter I., 3.)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a present and a gift to the whole world. This gift was given us when God sent his Son into the world and permitted him to become a man. But he did not stop there; he has manifested this gift to you and to me in *holy baptism*, that we might appropriate to ourselves, and possess throughout life, that which is included in this gift; and thus become rich, yea, “filled with all the fulness of God.”

But now, after this gift has been slighted, neglected and squandered by many, who have not employed it, but rather despised it, the Lord comes again and offers it to us in *the Gospel*, that we may in faith receive it, with acknowledgement of our poverty in the sight of God. How many such invitations to receive this unspeakable gift have come to us from God! How he calls men to the

communion of his love! How, if they heed his call, he discloses to them their sins and poverty, but also the riches of his grace! And the more a disciple grows in knowledge of his sins and in poverty of spirit, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the more does the Lord reveal to him, by the promises of his grace, the richness and the fulness of all the blessings that are in the unspeakable gift of God.

He reveals the fulness of his gift when he invites us in *the holy communion* to his table, and gives to each as much of this gift as he is in condition to receive. When he finds a real heart hunger, he gives in an unspeakable manner unspeakable things from his unspeakable abundance. For a fit communicant may frequently perceive that in the holy communion he has received great things, but in a way that he himself cannot express. And he understands that this gift has been revealed to him for his deeper and fuller enjoyment.

What shall we then say if we go deeply into the fulness of this unspeakable gift of God and consider, "It is God's will, yes it is of great consequence to him that we accept it?" When Paul considered this, he burst forth in the words, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" And when we examine the context, we observe that the apostle does not only say "thanks be unto God" in *words*, but that his thanks extended through his whole life, and composed its impulsive force. It was just on account of this gift that he could so frankly summon his Corinthian brethren, as he does in the eighth and ninth chapters of the Second Epistle, to contribute liberally for the necessities of the saints.

Thus, indeed, it should be. He who has received

God's unspeakable gift should show himself thankful for it, not only by a "thanks be unto God," but by his whole life. But how may our whole life become such a thanksgiving? *By a giving*, when we surrender ourselves as thanks for the gift of God. And, indeed, we should give not only to God, but also to our fellow beings; he wishes us to thank him through our brethren and neighbors. They and we need inexpressibly much, not only from God, but also from each other. Yes, how much do you need of your neighbor, and he in turn of you, in patience, meekness, charity, forbearance, kindness, and—forgiveness. There is therefore no lack of opportunity, if we wish to give; and God can never require so great gifts in return that his will not always be still greater; that is, that he will not always give more than we possibly can.

Whenever the Lord manifests himself in special measure as a giver, as now in the holy communion, he expects as fruit thereof a gift from us also; this is intended as a proof that we have really received something from him; it is not only an evidence but also an acknowledgement of his unspeakable gift. If he can say that by kindness unto all men we are to show ourselves children of him who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," he can also lay claim to our gifts as proofs that we are children of him who has given us an unspeakable gift. But let us not forget that this giving is something more than the mere proffering of this or that gift; in it is included the giving of *yourself*, of your all in all.

Dear Christian, this message that we, as thanks for God's unspeakable gift, are to give ourselves, our all in all, is a call to earnest self-examination to which we may not close our ears. Yet our sinful natures incline to some-

thing quite different from such giving. How full of pretense we are! How every action and our entire conduct is characterized by *claims* upon others; we want *to take*, instead of to give. And even when the Lord has gained power over us by his unspeakable gift and his grace, how much is still left of this depraved and self-seeking habit which also corrupts our demeanor to one another. The question may perhaps be asked in all seriousness, whether we have really received the unspeakable gift, if in our intercourse with one another we are so little disposed and so little prepared to give.

Therefore you should examine yourselves before God and consider how it is with you in this matter. For how does it accord that you continually take of the unspeakable gift of God, and on the other hand are unwilling, in your intercourse with others, to give, but wish only to exact? Is this thanking God for his gift? Is this bearing witness of his grace? Verily, it is a denial of his gift and grace. Resolve, then, that you will turn from this sin, and zealously arm yourselves against it.

Christmas stands at the door. It is as though the unspeakable gift which God has given us in his Son were coming anew into our poor world, in the angels' message "unto us is born a Savior." And here this Savior comes to his table with his gift, and you may again receive what you need. It is opened for you; it is poured forth into your lap. Not only is forgiveness open to you, but also a new heart is to be had, a heart great in its love for giving. Will you have it? Will you renounce your arrogant, selfish natures? Then come to your Savior. Receive him again, fully, deeply, and simply, that you may be able

again to give thanks fully, deeply and simply, as you consecrate yourselves anew to your brethren and neighbors. Exercise yourselves in it, also. If you have been reminded that you have received the great gift of your Savior's grace, be admonished also that you owe him thanks, that it is your duty freely to give, as you have freely received. Say to yourselves, "I have received all, therefore I will also give all." The more you practice true self-denial, the better you will understand how unspeakable is the gift of God; and you will be able to join with word and deed in the song of praise, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Amen.

V.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." (Hebrews XIII., 8.)

The apostle utters this truth after having spoken in the preceding verse of departed teachers. They go; but he who is the sum total of the dispensation of every true teacher, he remains.

Nothing in the world is so permanent as sin. What else has wholly endured in the course of time? What has not altered and changed with time? Generations and their works have passed away and perished; but Jesus Christ is the same as he was in earlier times, the same

*Delivered on New Year's Eve.

even to-day. And he will remain the same through all future time and throughout all generations, independent of their attitude to him. He is and will continue to be King of the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom is without end. He is a rock eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

But not only does he continue the same for himself, for his own person and in his own place; he is so also in his relation to us mortals—still the same, in whom alone is salvation, the only name given among men whereby they must be saved; still the same, Jesus Christ the Savior who has come, the Anointed One.

As he was "yesterday," in generations that are gone, so is he still to-day for those who to-day seek his face and call upon his name. And he will also be the same in future days, yes, not only that, but "forever." Yea, verily, he is and will be for all eternity Jesus Christ, the Lamb that hath been slain; and as he was last year, "yesterday," so will he also be to-day, to the last day of the year, and to-morrow, in the coming year.

Well for us, that we have something that remains unchanged—Jesus Christ, who is the same. We mortals, who of ourselves are not sure whether the things over whose possession we rejoice to-day will still be called ours to-morrow, or something else; we, who are still less able to say of *ourselves* that we shall be the same for a whole day, or an hour, or even a minute—much less a whole year. Ah, what an alternation in a poor human heart from one moment to another—between sweet and bitter feelings, sacred and unhallowed emotions, moods of exaltation and depression, between quiet and restlessness, fear and se-

curity, tranquility and discord, delight and dislike, even in respect to sacred things. Jesus Christ is the same; always our righteousness, if we have faith in him; ever a merciful high priest, if we flee to him; ever a helper, if we call upon him; ever a mediator, if we pray in his name; ever an advocate with his Father, if we come unto God through him; ever a savior from sin, if we confess our sins; ever our strength in weakness; always a conqueror, if we fight under his banner.

In his word and in his sacraments, too, Jesus Christ is ever the same. Many other instrumentalities lose their strength, are proclaimed as worthless, and replaced by others. But it is not so with the Lord's blessed means of grace. It remains the same, because he remains the same, alive and strong, humbling and healing, consoling and warning. And the holy communion is also the same to-day, and on this evening—the sacrament that forgives sins and cures defects, revives the weary and heavy laden, gives strength to the exhausted and energy to the impotent, and bestows light and power, now in a perceptible now in a more obscure way. Yes, praised be he who comes to us on this last day of the year the same as he has come in the past, blessed and blessing in the name of the Lord.

But if *he* is the same, what was *our* relation to him yesterday? what is it to-day? what will it be in the future, and forever?

What has been our attitude toward him in the past year? What has Jesus Christ been to you? How much has he been worth to your heart? Have you enjoyed communion with him? Have you loved and served him?

Have you rightly received his grace, or have you converted it to naughtiness and misused it? What use have you made of the name of Jesus, which was offered to you as a watchword at the beginning of the past year? Have you shown your gratitude by love to brethren and neighbors and by battle against sin? Have you lived for him who died and rose from the dead for you, or have you lived for yourselves? Yes, if you come into his presence in silence, how many such questions must you ask yourselves; or rather, how many will he have to direct to you, relative to the year that is past? And what will be your reply to all these questions? Must you not sink down with broken heart and cry, "God have mercy upon me?"

And what *is* your condition now—the attitude of your heart toward God? For if your attitude toward him is so entirely decisive of your destiny in time and in eternity, you should not allow it to remain unsettled. You may not neglect the matter unless you wish the future, in time and in eternity, to lie in darkness for you. It is not a matter of this or that form or work of salvation, nor of any possible emotion and impression; the question is, simply, "What is your personal attitude to Jesus Christ? Is he to you, what he desires to be to sinners? Have you your life in him, and he his life in you?"

Still another question: what *will be* your relation to him in the coming year, and forever? For it may be that eternity will dawn for you in the course of the coming year. He is the same; will you too, remain as of old? If so, you do not correctly understand the message that Jesus Christ is the same. Do you wish to remain the same? always remain similarly estranged from him? or similarly drowsy,

similarly remiss in faith and in prayer? Do you wish to remain your old self in unbelief, in selfishness, in worldly-mindedness, in impotence against sin, in compliance to the world? Do you wish to remain the same in your relation to God and your fellow men? How will you fare, if death finds you the same as of old?

This is to be considered well, dear communicants. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, not that you may remain the same, but that you may become another person, a new man in the new year of grace.

But if you *are* to become a new man, it is not said that you are to seek a new way. Jesus Christ is the Way. It is the old Saviour whom you seek and to whom you should turn; the old means of grace that you should employ, only in a different way than before—with greater earnestness, with more faith, with deeper trust, with a whole heart; then, you will not remain as of old. If this is what you seek and desire at the table of your Saviour, you will find that he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever; the same in grace and power, the same in truth and faith, the same here at his holy board. Amen.

VI.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. (Isaiah XXXVIII, 14.)

Thus King Hezekiah prayed, after the prophet had said to him, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die,

*Delivered on New Year's Eve.

and not live." He saw himself standing before the gates of Hell. Then distress pressed upon him, and forced from him the prayers, "O Lord, I am oppressed; help me."

Our plight is not the same as that of Hezekiah when he uttered these words; but nevertheless they seem to us quite appropriate at the present time. We are assembled on New Year's Eve, first to examine ourselves in silence before the Lord, and then to go to his table, there to gain comfort and refreshing. But should not the fact that we now stand at the close of an epoch call forth in us much the same impression that was made on Hezekiah, when his time was departed and removed from him as a shepherd's tent? Is not a considerable part of our time, also continually "departed and removed from us?"

When Hezekiah thought of this, he was reduced to distress. Should not the earnest contemplation of that which is past bring us also to distress? Let us consider the import of these words, in the light of the New Testament.

"*Lord, I am oppressed,*" I am in distress. According to the original meaning of the word, the kind of oppression referred to is that which arises when creditors press a debtor. It is customary, you know, for creditors to present their claims at the close of the year, as it is also customary to balance our accounts at that season, to see how we stand financially. But, beloved, have not we too such creditors, who appear before us at the close of the year and urge their claims? We may not put them off, for their demands are just. All *the days* that have passed—do not they appear before us again, face to face, with the question how we have used them, and thus remind us of

our debt to them? And then, all *the men* with whom we have come into contact in the course of the year, especially those with whom we were associated through our vocations, and whom we should have served in material or spiritual matters—are not they also creditors? do not they, too, have accounts against us? But it is *the Lord* who can chiefly call us to account, for all the gifts to body and soul which he has bestowed upon us. The days were given us as days of grace; and how much grace has he bestowed upon us; how great and how numerous are his claims!

Now, how do we face these claims? Have we made the right use of these days and hours? Have we accumulated in them indestructable, eternal treasures? How have we served our neighbors? Do we "owe no man anything but to love one another?" How have we employed the riches of Divine goodness, patience, and forbearance? so that they have borne us rich fruit to the honor of God?

Ah, if you earnestly ask all these questions, if you consider well all these claims, must you not cry out with Hezekiah, "O Lord, I am oppressed?" If ever a debtor has been pressed by his creditors, that should be the case with you now, when the whole past year stands as your creditor and urges its claims with eternal authority. For time, which passes so quickly, places us, for that very reason, before eternity. How soon may we be removed from time to eternity! Something therefore of the power and earnestness of eternity itself is in these questions, warnings and demands that are presented to us now, at the close of the year. Therefore they cause distress to everyone whose conscience is awakened; and he who is con-

scious of no distress as he thinks back on the past year, is asleep in security and sin. But what has such a one to do here, where sins are acknowledged and God is called upon out of the depths? For he to whom God imputes sin cries from the depths; he says, "O Lord, I am oppressed."

And not only does the past oppress him, but also the future. He is not able to content himself with the prospects of pardon and the remission of the guilt already accumulated, so little can a debtor rest in the fact that the creditor does not assert his rights; he cannot help thinking how we shall fare for the future. So a sincere soul, if his guilt is remitted for the present, earnestly plans to walk in the future so as to please the Lord in all things. He does not wish again to heap up fault upon fault, as before, even if he cannot remain entirely without fault. With the Lord is forgiveness, that we may fear him.

But what is left for that one to do who finds himself thus oppressed, both with respect to the past and as concerns the future? Hear what Hezekiah says: "O Lord, I am oppressed: undertake for me;" or, as the real sense of the word in the original text is, "help me," "appear for me," (as a bondsman). Hezekiah already had a conception, though as yet obscure, of the fact that he needed a surety to appear for him, and that in the Lord on whom he called, he had such a surety. We know who this surety is; and we can give no better advice to the one in distress than to turn to him.

He must appear as our security in reference to the debt that has accumulated, if it is not to be exacted of us to the last cent. But not only this: he must also

answer for us in reference to the future and to our conduct in the future, if it is to be otherwise with us.

Is not this so, beloved? How will you settle your great debt? How will you arrange for the future? Do you not need a bondsman, a mediator and Savior, who, atoning and interceding, intervenes, so that your sins are forgiven for his name's sake? Do you not need one who is also your surety, so that you can be assured in and through him that sin will not have dominion over you, but that you may be enabled to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness, to die to yourselves and to live unto God? Or do you think that your good resolutions will be sufficient warranty for the future? Have you not in past years made resolutions at the close of an old and the beginning of a new year; and were they ever kept? No, you need a surer warranty for the forgiveness of your sins and for a change of heart.

Such a warranty you will find in your Saviour, Jesus Christ. Already at his circumcision, of which the gospel of the morning treats, he had begun to undertake our cause. Then by his obedience to the law and with the first drops of his precious blood he gave a pledge of the redemption that he was to bring about. His name, Jesus, is now the name of a sure warrantor, who will not leave unfulfilled the obligations that he has assumed for us. His blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sins, that everyone who believeth on him may have forgiveness through his name. He will drown our sins in this, his sacred and precious blood, so that they shall be remembered no more. But because he has come to take away our sins, and to make us holy, he can also answer for our sanctification.

It is he “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” His title of Saviour implies the assurance of a full and complete salvation, so that sin can no more rule over him who believes in him, but that everyone who receives the fullness of the gift and grace from him shall reign in life. If he could not do this, he would not be the one whom we need; but he is both able and willing.

That he is both able and willing he shows by the fact that he meets us in the holy communion as the one who has become our surety and our Saviour. For here in his holy communion he comes to us with redemption in his blood, so that whosoever eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood dwelleth in Him, and He in him. He comes here to impart a sacred power and a new life in the spirit with the mortification of the flesh.

So you also may turn to him here at his table with the prayer of Hezekiah, “appear for me, appear in the midst as my surety.” And here too shall you with your whole heart and soul receive him as your surety. Consider what this means: it means that your many sins are forgiven, so that you can quietly meet all the accusations which arise against you out of the past year, and can confidently draw nigh to God. It means that you have a guaranty of a new relation to God and to men, so that for the future you will make better use of your time, pay more fully your debts of love to your neighbor and your brother, serve your God better, and be stronger in spirit to renounce yourself and the world. It means that he who is devout will become still more devout, and he who is holy, still more holy.

Perhaps the thought of this alarms you, because of

past experience. You fear that it will not be so; and you probably have reason to be discouraged at the thought of the possibility of a continuance of your former condition. But in the very midst of this discouragement you should fall at your Saviour's feet and plead with your whole heart, "Be my succor! Become my surety!" And if you seek him and cling to him as such, and remain in him with the honest resolution to lead a new life through him, you may be sure he will not turn his back upon you. He is true, he cannot deny himself. Only look to him, cling to him, believe in him; then will you not be put to shame. Amen.

VII.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Proverbs XVIII., 19.)

God the Lord has named himself to us; he has revealed himself to us. He has made to us his character from of old, not only through his Word, but also through his acts. What would we know of him otherwise? What could we otherwise expect of him? But now he has given to us to know him even as he is, so that we can know what kind of a God he is and what he will be to us, what we can have of him and what we have to expect of him. And the sum of all this whereby he has given himself to us that we might thus know him, is his name.

*Delivered on New Year's Eve.

When Solomon uttered the words quoted above, one name stood especially before his mind,—the name JEHOVAH. Under this name and by its help had the Lord made himself known to his people from the beginning as the one who was and ever would be the eternal, faithful, immutable God of the Covenant. Even then it could be said of this name that it was a strong tower for the men living in the changing course of time; for his people who had much faithlessness at their charge. He was the unchangeable one, he was the faithful one.

As the bud expands into the flower, so the name of the Lord has developed into that name which meets us so often in its glory and its splendor in this festive season,—the name of Jesus. By this name he has revealed himself to us as he who “saves his people from their sins.”

It may be said of this name, as of all those through which God has made himself known to us, that it is “a strong tower.” It is like a mighty, strong fortress, offering defiance to hostile attacks. Where is there anything stronger, mightier, than the ever-living God and his nature? What can vanquish him? who can bid him defiance? He does not waver nor yield; none will be put to shame who depend on him. Therefore it is also said, “Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.”

The name of the Lord is *our* strong tower. It is grounded in his eternal being, but it is revealed to us; and in this way the Lord has opened to us this tower, so that we can flee to it and be safe. When Moses stood one day before the Lord in the burning bush and received the difficult commission to free Israel from bondage, God

opened to him the strong tower of his name. Moses asked, "Who am I, Lord, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM THE ONE; GOD HATH SENT ME UNTO YOU." Thus, when the children of Israel stood on the threshold of a time of sore distress, he revealed to them his name as a strong tower to which they might flee, when he continued to Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." And has not the Lord through all the centuries opened to his people the strong tower of his name, that they might flee unto it?

To us also has he opened and disclosed his name in this way, that we may flee to it, as to a strong tower. How widely do the gates of this tower open when he gives his son the name, Jesus. And what else is it than this name—a hearing to all who pray in this name—forgiveness of sins to all who believe in his name?

And if it can be said of all God's acts that they open his name and reveal it unto us, this can be said, too, in a very special sense of God's deed, his word, and his conduct, in the holy sacrament. The saying, "this is my memorial unto all generations," applies also to his name

as it is revealed in the sacrament; for the holy communion was instituted in remembrance of him, in remembrance of his redemptive work.

The righteous runneth to this name, and is safe. He *runs*, for he sees that he is in danger, and knows no other place to which to flee, excepting this name and this Lord. Yes, how many thousands have already hastened to this name, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses did so, and all of Israel; David, and Daniel, and all the faithful of the Old Testament fled thither; and how many, even to-day, are hastening from the ends of the earth to this name of Jesus, to this strong tower, in order to be saved—even to-day, when an old year ends its course, and a new year with all its promises, begins.

He who flees to the strong tower of Jesus' name is *safe*; or, literally, he is set aloft, he is unassailable, he can be reached by nothing that threatens, no more than can the name of the Lord, to which he flees and in which he is shut up. Well for us, dear communicants, that there is such a strong tower! Let us flee to it in deed and in truth!

But are we altogether in need of it? Have we no other refuge? That is precisely the point at issue; let us consider it more carefully. Is there anything against which we must be defended? and have we ourselves or others any one to pray to who can defend us?

Much good and much evil has been prevalent in the year just past, and the waves have not yet subsided. The powers of evil are in violent motion; who can lay the storms that are, according to all indications, approaching? Man? No; no one but the Lord alone. The waves of sin, of unbelief, of infidelity, roll high; great deluges roar, who

offers us a stronghold high enough so that they cannot reach us? Man? No one but the Lord alone. The pestilence walketh in darkness and shows here and there its dismal face. Men do all in their power to defy it, but they cannot defend and save themselves. Only the Lord can do that.

But there are other things against which we must be defended—things still more dangerous than those that encompass us from without. Do you know sin in your own heart, my dear friend? Look back on the past; reflect on it. What lies behind you? a debt of sin that you cannot reckon—sins against God's law, sins against God's grace; sins against God, sins against your fellow men. Have you become what you might have become through God's grace? Have you not rather become and continued to be what you ought not to be? Does not a throng of recollections of bygone sins arise from the past? Who can protect you from the avenger of blood and the accuser? Wretch that I am, whither shall I flee? Where is the strong tower that no assault can reach, whither no avenger of blood can come? Where else than in the saving name of Jesus?

And if you look out upon the new year, how are you to be defended there? Do you not carry a corrupted nature with you into the new year? Does not an evil heart accompany you into the new time? Are there not sins that you have already known and confessed, but with which you have continually to fight? Do not new temptations await you, temptations from the Devil, the world, and your own flesh? Have you not consequently a whole host of foes, who arise against you and beset you? Cannot changes enter into your outer life that bring new tempta-

tions with them? At the thought of all this, terror must come upon every thinking man, so that he asks himself, "Whither shall I flee that I may be protected? where shall I find a strong consolation, to which I can always flee? Nowhere but in the name of the Lord, in the saving name of Jesus.

If you flee thither, you will be saved and protected; not so that you are exempt from all distress and temptations, nor so that your way leads to vain light and joy; not so does the Lord protect his own: but so that your soul is guarded. The Lord protects your soul; he preserves your going out and your coming in.

We have said, *if* you run thither; are you really running to that strong tower? Is your coming to the communion such a running, indicating your distress, your helplessness, your desire for help? And is it the name of the Lord to which you run, to the abandonment of everything else?

Behold, the Lord Himself meets you, saying, "Here am I! Here am I!" Hasten to him and preserve yourselves in the strong tower of his holy name. Amen.

VIII.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."—(Matthew VIII., 8).

These words, from the Gospel for the morning, were spoken by that centurion who came to Jesus in behalf of

*Delivered on the third Sunday after Trinity.

his sick servant. In reply to the centurion's prayer for help, the Lord said, "I will come and heal him." Then the centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

The centurion had learned to know Jesus as a Lord who stood above him and whose power was great. He himself was under the dominion of another, and yet he had power over soldiers and servants, so that when he said to this man, "go," he went, and to another, "come," and he came. Hence the centurion drew the conclusion that Jesus was able to accomplish his will in still higher things simply by a word. He needed only speak the word, and the servant should be healed. This faith so pleased the Lord that he "marvelled, and said to them that followed, "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." For that reason, too, the centurion exalted Jesus, and called him Lord; he himself is far beneath him: "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof."

Should not we have a deeper comprehension of the sublimity of Christ than had that centurion, and for that reason humble ourselves before it? And should not we believe, in far greater degree than the centurion, that Jesus can do and effect, by His word alone, whatever we ask of Him? But since we have now assembled to prepare ourselves for the holy communion, we will not dwell so long upon how the Lord by His word alone can carry out His will in whatever we ask, as upon this clause, that he will come under our roof. There was no need that Christ should do this in the case of the centurion and his servant;

but we need that the Lord should come under our roof, and he will do it in the holy communion.

The centurion sought help of Jesus for his sick servant; should not we seek help of him above all for our sick hearts and souls? O, how much sickness is hidden there! And the better we know the sickness of our souls, the more grievously are we tormented. Do you know it, dear soul: if so, you must go to Jesus. None other can heal you.

“Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,
An all-sufficient ransom paid:
Oh, matchless price, his precious blood
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.

Jesus the sacrifice became
To rescue guilty souls from hell;
The spotless, bleeding, dying Lamb,
Beneath avenging justice fell.

Amazing goodness, love divine;
Oh, may our grateful hearts adore
The matchless grace; nor yield to sin,
Nor wear its cruel fetters more!”

So, if you come to seek with the centurion help and healing from the Lord Jesus, he will reply, “I will come and heal you.”

In his word the Lord gives splendid promises regarding healing and help and salvation. And if he spake a word only, that would have to satisfy us; but he does not leave the matter rest at that. We need more: he must come under our roof; and this he does in and through the holy communion.

He will come in person, as he is—with all that he is and can do; for if he comes, he does not come partially; he does not bring with him *something*, but *everything*. He will come under our roof, into the dwelling of our hearts. And, indeed, he comes to *abide* under our roof, not to withdraw again presently, as it sometimes seems, after the communion; no, he will remain in and with us; and he comes to abide with us that he may heal us.

To be sure, the guilt of our souls is great; the sin seems entirely incurable; but still he can heal it. He is rich in power and grace; he heals the wounds of conscience while he forgives the sin for his name's sake.

“His body, broken for my sake,
My soul and body whole will make.”

He will sink our sins in the depths of the sea, to remember them no more. And he does this because he has shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins.

He heals the corruption of sin, which is otherwise incurable, and selfishness, that deep-seated evil, with all the great mischiefs that are in its train. For if he comes under your roof, he does it that he may be Lord of the house, that he may take the place which your own “I” had otherwise occupied. And if he cannot occupy this place at once—the only one that belongs to him as Lord—he still works that he may take possession of it when the soul surrenders itself entirely to him.

Yes, he comes under our roof, here to go out and in with us, just as if a man should come to our home as our daily associate—one who sees and hears all that occurs; who shares everything that concerns us; who has some-

thing to say in everything that is undertaken. Thus will the Saviour come to us in the holy communion.

What great grace is in this! It is beyond all asking and comprehension.

There is also in it, however, a trial and a warning. Are you willing that he should come under your roof? Will you have him for your Saviour? Will you permit him to save you from your sins? Are you indeed willing for him to be Lord in your heart? Will you commit its government to him? Will you yield him first place? Are you willing to have him there in the presence of everything, to let him see and hear everything that occurs under your roof? Or is there perhaps something there, in the presence of which you would not have him? something that is not compatible with his presence?

But what an admonition is here also for everyone who has received him, that he now wishes to be the constant Lord in your house, in your heart, in your business, in your life. How helpful it should be to every communicant at the Lord's table, if it is to serve its salutary purpose, that the Lord has come under his roof to dwell with him, to go in and out with him! What an admonition to heed his presence, even if one has no direct sense of it! What an admonition to hold intercourse and communion with him by means of the Word and of prayer!

If, then, you are willing to receive him and let him heal you of your sins, and he is willing to come and restore you—as he says, “I will come,” you certainly have reason to say with the centurion, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.”

Yes, he is the Lord, the great and sublime God, who ever liveth, who dwelleth on high and in the sanctuary,

whose name is holy; but who are you? a poor, foul sinner, so full of sin, afflicted with so much wretchedness. And should he come to *you*, shall he enter beneath *your* roof? Truly, you have reason for saying, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come to me." Such a confession certainly becomes you. And such a confession is also well pleasing to the Lord—the more pleasing the more heartfelt it is.

But that does not hinder you from going to him, nor does it hinder him from coming to you. It will not hinder him from coming to you, and healing you, for he dwelleth "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah LVII., 15.) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalms LI., 17.) Then he can so much the better glorify his grace in you. This is his delight, this his honor.

But albeit you are not worthy that he should come under your roof, this need not hinder you from going to him, or from receiving him when he comes. For if he may not come until you are worthy, he will never come, you may never admit him. His grace and promises are your merit. His grace and promises apply to the unworthy. Therefore, with all your unworthiness, you may lay hold of his offer to come to you. This it is to lay hold in faith. It was the faith of the centurion that was so pleasing to the Lord; and it was faith that he praised so highly in the Canaanitish woman when in the midst of her unworthiness, voluntarily comparing herself with the dogs, she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

And not only does he wish to be received in faith; he wishes also to dwell in the heart by faith. In Ephesians III., 17, it is written, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." And if we wish to hold fast to our confidence that he has come to remain under our roof, it also rests with us to remain in faith with him; for his entrance to us, and his abiding with us as well, often occurs in secret; hence faith without sight.

But such faith must depend first and last on the forgiveness of sins. On this account he not only brings us forgiveness of sins in the sacrament, but also in absolution. Yes, does he not meet you here in the confession with the promise of the remission of your sins, that thus he may, as it were, open the way between you and him, so that he can enter under your roof, and you can admit him to your heart.

Thus meet him, then, if he wishes to come to heal you, with a sincere confession of your guilt, so that he may be able to say to you also, "Go, son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee!" Amen.

IX.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."—(I. Cor. I., 23-24.)

Before we enter Lent with the coming week, it is fitting, especially in connection with our preparation for the

*Delivered on Estomihi Sunday.

holy communion, that we should pause for a moment to consider these words of the apostle. The crucified Christ is the subject of our meditation throughout the whole Passion season; and the holy communion places him before our eyes as the one who comes to us to manifest his power and his wisdom.

The apostles had learned by experience how Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness. The Jews could not reconcile themselves to such a Christ, for his cross did not agree with their way of thinking. They wished to have another Christ, one after their carnal, self-righteous way of thinking. The Greeks, again, in their supposed wisdom, could not accustom themselves to a crucified Christ; it was too much at variance with their rational way of thinking: therefore the preaching of the Cross was to them foolishness.

The human heart, the carnal mind, has not altered. The self-sufficiency of the Jews has become extinct as little as has the conceit of the Greeks, and reveals itself just as strongly to-day as in the times of the Jews. Do we not see and hear in our own day how the preaching of the Cross is an offense to the people, and appears foolishness to them?

So must it be; and it will become so more and more, the more independent of God men try to make themselves, and the more they exalt human power and human wisdom above him. Yes, we have seen that even those who do not wish to belong to the world have been offended at the message of the Cross and at atonement by the Cross, because it does not accord with their reason.

But this same preaching which is a stumblingblock

and foolishness to the carnal mind is, according to the apostle's word, "unto them which are called," who have received the call in submissive faith, "the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (v. 25.) "When God is 'foolish,' as in his revelation in Christ, in which everything is so entirely incompatible with our human conceptions, he is still wiser than all men; and when he is 'weak,' as in Christ, who was apparently so far from being a revelation of divine strength, he is still stronger than men; only God conceals his wisdom under folly, and his power, hidden under weakness, is different from human wisdom and power, greater and higher than they."

Yes, Christ crucified is the *power* of God; for through him and his death on the cross God has raised the fallen world. Through Christ and his death on the cross he has redeemed the world and conquered Satan, sin, and death. What can the whole world do against these forces? But what power does the preaching of the Crucified manifest to those who are called? It can do what the whole world cannot. It accomplishes and effects what all men could not have brought about by their own efforts; what no tears and sobs, no resolutions and endeavors, not the most desperate exertions can accomplish—to clear the conscience, to give peace, to remove the burden of sin, to fill a selfish heart with love, to bridle sinful desires and the like—all this comes as power from the cross, from the preaching of Christ crucified. What is all human power against the power of the cross?

Christ crucified is the *wisdom* of God; for his cross un-

ravels all contradictions; at his cross we see how the holy love and the holy wrath of God are not at variance, but in agreement; at the cross of Christ we see how the greatest sin and baseness on the one hand, and God's plan of redemption and love on the other, work together for one and the same end. Christ's cross solves all otherwise hidden mysteries. And if a man has bowed beneath this cross, a light dawns for him that brightens everything; then it becomes his greatest wisdom to know Him; for the cross gives him an outlook upon the whole grace of God, upon life and death, upon time and eternity. He possesses in the knowledge of the Crucified that which the whole world and its sages are seeking in vain—that which will satisfy the innermost needs and the deepest longings of our hearts for truth and light.

It is this preaching that is to echo especially in the blessed Passion season just at hand. And it is this preaching, too, through which God wishes to show his power and his wisdom to our soul and our poor hearts. How we should rejoice at this!

Further, it is this preaching that, if we may say so, receives flesh and blood in the holy communion; for in the holy sacrament the crucified Christ comes to us, to impart to us his crucified body and his shed blood.

Do you now desire, dear Christian, to become participants in this power and wisdom of God? Not everyone who hears the preaching of the Crucified, not everyone who comes to the Lord's table, experiences without further ceremony the blessing of the cross; all depends upon the inner disposition. No one can experience the power of God who has not learned to know his own weakness; no one can learn to know the wisdom of God so long as he

has not learned to know his own foolishness: otherwise the Crucified will be a stumblingblock and foolishness. And this is true because there is in your heart something of the same nature that was responsible for the fact that the message of the cross was unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness. Neither the Jewish nor the heathen mind can lay hold on Christ. Where a Jewish, self-righteous nature, or a heathen, fleshly nature holds sway, offense is taken at the preaching of the cross. But if it has come to pass that your carnal mind no longer has the mastery, and you have begun to rely on God, even then a greater or less share of this leaven may still be present within you. And in the degree that this is so, something within you is to blame for the fact that the Crucified, his preaching and his gifts in the holy sacrament do not become the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore it is important for everyone who is not willing to content himself with a mere beginning of the Christian race, but heartily desires the Lord to carry out His work in him, to examine and search his own heart, that nothing of what the Lord wishes to bring to light and to correct should remain hidden and unpunished. And therefore it is so important that every Lenten season and every celebration of the holy communion be a time of repentance, a preparation, through penitent heart examination and through approach in faith to the mercy seat. Where this does not occur, where all remains as of old, where there is no new uncovering and confessing of sin and self-abasement before God, then neither does the story of the passion of Jesus, or the holy sacrament, bring anything new. And yet the story of the cross, as well as the communion, em-

braces so much of blessing; a blessing that is only waiting to be shared with us poor sinners.

And do you not need, dear soul, to experience more of this divine power and wisdom, if you have already known something of it? Do you not need the power of God to keep peace and joy in your heart, that you may die to sin and live unto righteousness, that you may turn to love and patience, that you may not live for yourself, but for him who died and rose again for you? O, think how much sin still remains in you, how much weakness still prevails in your life and character—all things that need not be so, as long as the power of God is at your command in the Crucified One. And should you not need more of the wisdom of God just now, as you are about to meditate on the passion of Christ? How blind you still are in respect to so much that is comprehended in the message of the cross! How much need you have of knowledge of God, of the wisdom that is above, yes, even of knowledge of God's word and understanding of his will! How unwise you still are in your conduct, even in spiritual affairs. This need not be so, when the wisdom of God is still at your command, in the Crucified One, and beneath his cross.

Do you feel this? does it humble you so that you are willing to seek help and redemption of the Crucified One? Then you will perceive, both by the preaching of the passion and by the holy communion, that the Crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God. But you must also earnestly consider, if you do not wish to take offense anew or to lose your self-command, that it is *God's* power, not your power, *God's* wisdom, not your wisdom; so that if the Crucified wishes to show you his power and wisdom, that does not at all mean that your own power and wisdom shall

be honored thereby. No; as in the person of Christ the power of God has manifested itself as the deepest weakness and His wisdom as the greatest folly, so it will in like manner be revealed to you also. The Apostle Paul bears witness to this in II. Corinthians XIII., 4: "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." Whoever, therefore, thinks that the Christian life shows itself in manifest power, does not understand the message of the cross. Not only has the Lord himself gone the way of the cross, but everyone who wishes to experience the blessing of the cross must travel the same road. And this way leads the soul into weakness and darkness; but not so that it remains therein; rather, so that in its weakness it lays hold of the power of the cross, and in the darkness sees the light of the cross. Then we do not boast of our own power, our own joy, our own light; rather do we glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us. In such meekness we first learn to know the Crucified as the power of God; and so the weakness of God proves itself stronger than men.

This is the way he opens to you, as you accompany Jesus on his way of suffering. This is the way he opens to you as you come to the table of the Lord. The Lord teach us all to walk in this way! Amen.

X.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—(Isaiah LV., 2.)

In the familiar fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah is depicted the suffering Messiah, and the fruit of his suffering. In the following chapter, the fifty-fourth, the subject is the advantage that accrues to his bride, the church, from his passion. Then the fifty-fifth chapter begins with an invitation to "everyone that thirsteth" to "come to the waters," and to "him that hath no money," to "come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." To these the prophet now directs the words of the text: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

He says first, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" or literally, "Wherefore do ye weigh silver for something that is yet not bread?" Men spend much pains, labor and care on things that are not bread—things that cannot satisfy the immortal soul. The Lord says, in the Gospel for the morning, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." (John VI., 27.) All that man can acquire, produce or achieve is still that which is not bread

*Delivered on Mid-Lent Sunday.

for the spirit. Whatever man may do in such respects is still vain and fruitless trouble.

When the prophet continues, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, *and your labor for that which satisfieth not?*" we must think in the first place of every labor undertaken by a man who has begun to concern himself about his soul's salvation, in order to appease the hunger of his soul. He longs for mercy, righteousness and life. At first he usually thinks to bring it to pass by himself alone, through his own labor, through his own efforts in his heart, through his own exertions and endeavors, that he be satisfied and the thirst of his soul assuaged. And the same thing is repeated many times later, when peace has been found, but the need is felt of more life, more power; especially when it is a question of new problems, new conflicts, or perhaps a new advance in the way of salvation. He forgets the way in which he was helped the first time, how he received the Lord Jesus at first, and easily gets into his own works and labors again, in order to gain the victory and to advance farther on the right way.

To those who are in this condition, who are spending their labor, the prophet calls, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" And he shows them that this is not the right way and the right manner to find what they are seeking; that they cannot become satisfied and at rest through their own works. It is as though he should say, "Have you not seen and learned by experience that such labor is in vain? Have you not found out that this labor furnishes you neither grace, nor rest, nor power?"

But he does not stop there; he does not only tell what is in vain: he also shows them how they can find the grace

and rest, the strength and satisfaction which they seek. He says, by command of the Lord, and in his name, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

First, the Lord bids them give ear to him: "hearken diligently unto me," They will not be satisfied and find what they desire by what they *do*; instead, they are to give ear. They are to leave this, and *hearken*, hearken to *him*, hearken to what he has to say, and what he will do and give.

They are to eat good things: "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good." He has something good to give them, wine and milk: milk, that supports life, and wine, that comforts the heart, that gives new strength and new courage, pleasure and joyousness. He has prepared it; it is all ready. All that they need do is to eat. Labor satisfieth not, eating satisfies. And what does it mean to eat the good things of the Lord, if not that we take them, receive them into ourselves as one receives nourishment?

Not only does such eating and appropriating to ourselves of the heavenly goods satisfy; it also gives new courage, new strength, or, as it is set down in our text, it causes our souls to delight themselves in fatness.

What the prophet says here is nothing else than what the Lord himself bears witness to in the New Testament. The prophet invites those who "spend their labor," instead of coming to the Lord. The Lord Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The prophet invites those who are wearing themselves out in their own labor, to appropriate the good things the Lord has prepared; the Lord Jesus invites us to a feast at which

everything is prepared: "Come, for all things are ready." The prophet bids those who have no money to buy "without money and without price;" the Lord calls the thirsty to come and "take the water of life freely." The prophet speaks of good things that not only satisfy, but in which the soul can delight itself; the Lord Jesus says that he came that his sheep "might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The prophet offers good things that can satisfy; Jesus tells what this good, satisfying bread is: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (Johin VI., 35) He says, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John VI., 27.)

And now, dear communicants, you cannot be ignorant as to what the goods things are, of which the prophet says, "eat ye that which is good." You cannot be ignorant as to what the prophet invites, when he says, "come ye." You know, too, what you may expect to hear when he says, "hearken unto me." Here at his table the Lord says, "This is my body, given for you for the remission of sins." Hearken; here is told you what the good things are that you may eat: "this is my body; this is my blood." And if the Lord now invites you to his table, he says, "Come unto me, ye who are weary and heavy laden. Bid farewell to all your own labor; it does not satisfy; it gives no rest and no strength. But my good things give you all this, if you will but eat them." Here is fulfilled the saying, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live forever." (Psalms XII., 26.) Yes, should not the bread of *God*, which God has sent

down from heaven, in which God himself presents himself in his Son—should not that satisfy? should it not give life and strength? The Lord says indeed of this spiritual food and drink: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life :and I will raise him up at the last day." (John VI., 54.)

So it is quite as though we heard words of invitation to the holy communion from the mouth of the prophet, when he says: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Now, what does the invitation say *to you*, dear communicants? You are all thirsty, and you all weigh out silver, to some extent, in order to obtain bread. But what kind of bread is it after which you are striving and for which you are making efforts? In other words, in what are you seeking your satisfaction? what are you seeking and longing for to quench your thirst? You can discover this if you will look into your heart and examine yourself. Perhaps that which you seek is something that is not bread, something that cannot satisfy the immortal spirit. Wherefore do you spend so much trouble and care on it? wherefore do you waste so much time on it? it is lost trouble, lost time. At the end you will remain without bread, hungering to all eternity.

But you who are seeking the real bread, the grace and fellowship of your God, the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God—how do you expect to find this? How

and when do you think to become satisfied? when you labored and thus earned, or at least, when you by your labor have reached the point where you can enjoy the fruit of your labor? Ah, then you will never be satisfied, never. You can work till you are tired and hungry; in a certain sense you must do it, before you can be fed. But that does not mean that you shall be satisfied; no, then for the first time you will hear the Lord's invitation, then first you will hear the question, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Then for the first time you will comply with the invitation, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." If you have reached such a state that you expect nothing more of yourself, then come and sit down at the Lord's table and satisfy yourself with his good things, with the good things that *he*, through *his* labor, has earned.

And you in whom the Lord has aroused a desire for more grace, for new strength, for help against sin and against your foes; you who labor with heart and soul to receive what God wills, to become what you may be of yourselves; spend not your labor for that which satisfieth not; no, hearken, eat, receive your powerful, compassionate Saviour at the table which he has prepared for you in the presence of your enemies. And then be still and consider that he is God; that it is he whom you have received. But first confess that you have no money, that you are sinners, who seek everything from grace: for "God giveth grace to the humble." Amen.

XI.*

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, it is not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” I. Corinthians X., 16-17.)

Since we have assembled here on this solemn evening, the evening on which the holy communion was instituted, to receive as guests at the Lord’s table the sacred gifts that are here dispensed, we shall consider what these words of the apostle tell us of the communion of the Lord’s supper. May the spirit of the Lord rest on us as we speak, and upon you, dear communicants, as you hear. Otherwise we shall speak and listen in vain. The Lord grant us his Holy Spirit.

In the holy sacrament there is a communion or connection between the wine and the blood of Christ, and between the bread and the body of Christ. It has pleased the Lord to connect them, therefore they are connected, so that by means of these visible, earthly things he offers us the greatest heavenly gifts. But let us not lose a moment in examining into this mystery, but rather bring our minds to admire this institution of the Lord, through which he has wished to come so near to us for the purpose of bringing about another communion, another fellowship.

The apostle says, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” The apostle calls the cup “the cup of blessing,” because among

*Delivered on Holy Thursday.

the Jews the cup at the Passover supper over which the father of the family said grace, was so called. It is the cup which the Lord has blessed, and which on this account drips with blessings, and which we bless and receive with prayer and thanksgiving. When we become partakers of this cup, we partake also of the blood of Christ and enter into communion with him. "And the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" When we become partakers of the bread, we partake of Christ's body, and enter into communion with him.

And what a communion and fellowship is that! Communion with Christ's body and blood! How high and holy it is! It should justly turn our minds to holy soberness. Here, if anywhere, the words are applicable, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Here we are entering upon the holy of holies.

And what else does this communion aim at than a communion of the death and of the life of Christ? We are to become partakers in his death as a propitiation for our sins, for the forgiveness of sins. That is first; for without expiation there is no forgiveness of sins, no communion with the holy God. "This cup," says the Saviour, "is the new testament in my blood, shed for you for the remission of sins." And this remission of sins is not something that we need only occasionally, if we are really in communion with God; no, we need "daily and richly" the forgiveness of our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God extends a daily and a rich forgiveness to those who are walking in the light.

But communion with the Lord, especially as it presents itself to us in the holy sacrament, is also at the same

time a communion with the life of Christ; for we become partakers of his holy, glorified body, which is filled and penetrated with eternal spiritual vigor. United with Jesus Christ through his blood, we are also to receive from his strength all the godliness that is of service and godly conduct. So the Lord especially desires us to enter ever deeper, through the holy communion, into the communion of the death and of the life of Christ.

But the Lord's supper also aims at another communion. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

What the Lord wishes to accomplish through his communion—the communion that he wishes to bring about—is consequently also a communion between all those who eat of the one bread. Since the partaking of it is a communion of the body of Christ, those who partake of it are one body, and members one of another. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," says the Apostle Paul in Romans XI., 5. The epistle emphasizes this again and again: that all who obey the Lord are connected like the members of the body, and especially in that love in which one serves the other, as the members of the body serve one another. The observance connected with the eating of the passover lamb had this aim, that it should be eaten in common with others, and never alone. So such a communion of the people of God was aimed at already in the passover. How much more must the Lord have intended, in the covenant feast of the New Testament, that those who partook of it should be united like the members of the body. Thus the holy sacrament is a complete communion—a sacred fellowship of grace and love in and through Jesus Christ.

Pause beside it a while, dear communicants; the Lord give you grace to consider it aright. The words of our text especially recall to our minds this, the evening of the institution of the sacrament, on which so many are assembled to celebrate the Lord's supper. On this occasion, if ever, the Lord's design in instituting the holy communion is clearly and plainly placed before our souls, so that no one will come merely from force of habit, only because of custom or by reason of an incidental frame of mind. Oh, no, it is an entirely different matter. Here it is a question of something that intrenches upon our whole life and our whole relation to the Lord and to our brethren; we are here concerned with something that must manifest itself in our inner relations to God and our whole heart attitude toward those who wish to obey the Lord; for it is a matter of communion.

Can you, dear communicants, enter into communion with the sacred body and blood of your Redeemer? You cannot avoid coming into contact with them if you go to the sacrament, for they are offered to you in the bread and wine. But into what kind of contact with them do you come? a mere outer contact does not redound to your profit, but to your detriment, if it is not your heart's desire to meet your Saviour, in order to receive him. You cannot enter into communion with his blood for the forgiveness of sins, if you do not feel your sins and long for forgiveness, so that you may draw nigh unto God. For it is possible to be conscious of one's sin and to desire forgiveness without longing for nearness to God. In a certain sense it is possible to wish for forgiveness of sins only that we may be freed from solicitude for our sins. You cannot enter into communion with the body of Christ if you do not

wish to receive the life power that he has in himself and that he desires to impart to your heart and life. If you wish to live for yourself—to pass your own fleshly life in self seeking and love of the world, you can have no part in the new life of Christ.

But we must also consider, regarding this communion and fellowship with the faithful, that no one can enter it by the mere partaking of the holy sacrament, without further ceremony. A communion such as this must have your profound consideration. How should I be able to be one body with the disciples of Jesus and one member among them, if I am not in communion with the Lord himself? How can I always be united with them in a cordial bond of love if I am unacquainted with them in the depths of my heart, or perhaps even hostilely inclined? In this way attendance on the Lord's supper becomes a contradiction—a conflict in reference to that which the Lord purposes in the communion, and a contradiction in reference to the whole heart condition of such a man. The Lord preserve us, in his grace, from such a communion!

How different it is with those who heartily desire a real communion! They desire to draw nigh to God in the confession of their sins, through the blood of Jesus; they desire to receive the power of his life; they desire to be united in love with all who are members of the body of Jesus Christ. If such a desire exists, the Lord will graciously meet us in his holy communion. But how necessary it is that such a desire be awakened! Is there not often a lack of precisely that which characterizes the communion of which we are speaking? Is there not ordinarily a lack of that steadfast faith that can give cleansing in the blood of Christ? Is

there not a lack of that life power which the Lord wishes to impart through his life-giving flesh, of which he says, that whosoever eateth thereof, shall live? And if we think of the communion of love which the Lord desires to see among the faithful and which he himself will bring about, how little do we avail ourselves of it! How much self-seeking and self-love does your pitiful playing carry with it! This lack does not depend on the fact that the Lord has not enough to give; does he not offer us the cup of blessing with his precious blood? does he not give us the blessed bread of life? does he not reveal to us a love that will melt the most selfish heart? What then is lacking? what is the hindrance? Let the Holy Spirit reveal it to you, whether it lies in your relation to the Lord or to your brethren. Confess it; renounce it; let the Lord help you, as he is able and willing to do. And then deal carefully with the grace the Lord shows you when he meets you in the communion. Have concern for the communion of brotherly love, and come before him, as is becoming, with humble confession of your guilt. Amen.

XII.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant."

Thus speaks the Psalmist David in the 111th Psalm, verses 4 and 5. The subject of this Psalm is the works and

*Delivered on Holy Thursday..

commandments of the Lord, which Israel had experienced in the course of time and which had been nothing but miracles of God's grace and mercy. They are indeed great and adorable, in and by themselves; but in the eyes of the Psalmist it is especially great and adorable that the Lord hath made his wonderful works *to be remembered*. By this remembrance the Psalmist appears to have meant the holy feast by which God's works to his people were brought anew to their remembrance; and when he speaks of eating—"he hath given meat unto them that fear him"—we think of the passover supper which constituted one of the sacraments of the Old Testament.

Greater and more glorious works than Israel experienced has the Lord performed for the people of the New Testament. These, too, are "wonderful works:" that is, works and deeds not revealed in the laws that concern the association of men with each other; for they are works and deeds of a gracious and compassionate God. The Lord is *gracious*; for "he hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;" he shows kindness without any meritorious cause on the part of man. And he is *full of compassion*; for he is moved to help in so overwhelming a manner by the need of man that this reason outweighs with God all other motives that might have hindered, according to human views, the showing of such kindness.

All God's mercies are such wonders of grace and compassion, after all; even those which are bestowed upon us in temporal affairs, although these are not looked upon by most men as wonders, and still less as wonders of grace and compassion; for these gifts from God are received so

much as matter of course that we even think we have a right to complain if we do not receive them continuously, and in the richest measure. But the most wonderful works of grace and compassion are the works and deeds that God has shown us through his Son and his Holy Spirit. It is a wonder of *grace* that God has given his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; a wonder of *compassion* that God through his Holy Spirit calls and enlightens men and guides them to participation in the redemption in Christ, and therewithal so renews them in heart and life that they become holy.

Among us, too, has the Lord made his wonderful works to be remembered. This sacred festive time is such a memorial for us. The occasion recalls to our minds the precious, bitter suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his triumphant resurrection. And what a precious gift are these holy days which bring before our souls anew the great redemptive works of the Lord. But still more glorious is the memorial of God's wonderful work that we have in the holy communion. As the passover supper in the Old Testament was a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, so this feast is a memorial of the great deliverance from all sin, and from the power of death and Satan. It is a memorial of the grace and compassion that the Lord showed us poor mortals when he suffered death for us while we were yet sinners.

And what kind of a memorial of his wonderful works do we have in the communion? only such as when we honor the memory of a great man who has died? only a commemoration, consisting in the devotion of a few admiring thoughts and feelings to this great hero or philosopher?

Yes, it has often been conceived thus, as though things were not quite different in the kingdom of God! And then, too, the fact that people who are not much concerned about keeping the Lord Jesus in remembrance in other respects, flock together to his table in greater numbers than usual on his holy day, perhaps furnishes grounds for the fear that many know of no other memorial save this superficial one.

But as the Lord is living, so, too, his memorial is living and life-giving. His works and wonders belong not to those things that have had their value only in times and among races that have passed away. No, the redemption commemorated by the holy communion still has the same significance as at the time when it was consummated; for *us*, as well as for those who stood beneath the cross of our Lord. Since the Lord hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, he has placed them living and present before our eyes, in order to make them living to and present in our hearts. Yes, he purposes nothing more nor less than to make us participants in his wonderful works, his grace and compassion; and that not only by outward means, but also inwardly, through the most intimate communion of his grace and compassion.

This was already the case, to a certain extent, in the Old Testament memorial as we meet it in the passover feast; the words of the text, "he hath given meat to them that fear him," seem to point to it. It was not sufficient for the Israelite to sprinkle his door posts with the blood of the paschal lamb; he must also eat the lamb in the manner prescribed by the Lord, in order to share in the grace and compassion that God showed his people when he led them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

And this was to be done not only with the first paschal lamb, but through all time; until the Lord himself, on the evening of Holy Thursday, ate the last passover supper with his disciples, and thereby established a new and more glorious memorial of his works of grace and compassion. He wished to show this that, as is said in the words of our text, "he will ever be mindful of his covenant."

With the memorial which the Lord has established in the holy communion, the outer, that which can be seen by the eye, is of less service in awakening remembrance of his wonderful works than was the case with the passover lamb among the Israelites. But as his works, his life, his grace and compassion are so much more spiritual in the New Testament than in the Old, so also the memorial of his works is more inner and spiritual, but for that very reason so much the more significant and powerful with those who enter into the right relation to him and his wonderful works, as these also presuppose more.

When our Saviour sat at the table with his disciples on Holy Thursday evening, he took bread, blessed it, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Consequently the words, "he hath given meat unto them that fear him," apply here also. He gives us his glorified body, which is "meat indeed," and his glorified blood, which is "drink indeed;" the body, given for us, the blood, shed for many for the remission of sins. Thus he wishes to have us partake in his salvation; in his blood, for the forgiveness of our sins; in his blood, to bring us to life and blessedness, that we may become partakers of his death and his life; that he may become *our* death and *our* life. Remembrance of him, consequently, consists in something quite different from devoting a few

pious thoughts and feelings to remembrance of him: it consists in this, rather, that he imparts himself to us and makes us partakers of himself and of the fruits of his redemption; that he remains in us, and we in him; that we who eat him shall live by him (John VI., 57); that we here find grace for our sins and receive strength to help in our time of need. It is said, "he hath remembered his covenant forever," the new covenant that he has instituted with his blood, as he says: "this cup is the new testament in my blood. This do in remembrance of me." Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," says the Lord, and thereby announces that he has made his wonderful works to be remembered, to the end that his disciples may keep in mind himself and his wonderful works. "This admonition of our Lord to remember him is not a command, which communicants are to fulfill in their own strength; but the partaking of Jesus in the holy communion enables them to comply with the Lord's admonition, "this do in remembrance of me." The love of Jesus and the great value of his services is thus so fixed in the memory of a genuine disciple of Jesus that he enjoys the love of Jesus in the holy communion and receives the fruit of his mercies."

If, then, the Lord has in this way instituted a memorial of his wonderful works, we understand, dear communicants, that it has its deeper presuppositions, if we are really to share in this remembrance. Our text tells us in a word who these are for whom this memorial is provided, who can rightfully share in it: "he hath given meat unto them that fear him." By "them that fear him" was meant (in the Old Testament) those who asked and sought after the

Lord; such as laid it especially to heart to have God as a friend, and who therefore honored his word and remembered his commandments to do them. With such God-fearing souls, longing for the grace of God increases more and more; they wait for the consolation of Israel, for the grace and compassion of the Lord. By that means the redemptive work of God and the remembrance of it becomes so precious to them. Then, as the Lord instituted such a memorial of his wonderful works, he announced that he remembered his covenant with the fathers. With grateful minds they ate the passover lamb in remembrance of the great redemptive act of God, on which his covenant with them depended.

If we, then, are to celebrate the holy communion worthily, that is, in a manner that corresponds with its nature and purpose, we must also be numbered with them that fear him and with those who are interested in knowing his grace and compassion; and indeed this is of the utmost importance. We must have a genuine need of entering into communion with our God and Saviour: solemn feelings and devout thoughts do not suffice here; neither are the desired results produced by the observance of a custom, however excellent in itself. We here have to do with something more than a mere temporary devout frame of mind, with some good resolutions in its train. Here the Lord demands more of his guests than a general assent to Christianity—unless we wish to eat of this bread and to drink of the Lord's cup unworthily. Consider well before you come to the Lord's table, lest you profane the Most Holy by your coming to the communion, and bring a judgment upon yourselves. How can the memorial of

his wonderful works that the Lord has instituted in the communion be correctly valued by you, if you do not seek to learn to know his wonderful deeds in *daily* intercourse with him through the word and prayer; if you show by neglect of the word and of prayer that his saving grace has little or no value to you? How can you eat with his followers at his table, unacquainted with him as you are, and as you wish to remain? No, not in this way.

Here the Lord wishes to find such as have learned in his fear to feel their sins and their wretchedness; such as long for his grace and compassion, and expect everything from him. Before the eyes of such he wishes to place his wonderful deeds of grace and compassion, that they may remember them to the consolation of their hearts. Especially is that a wonder of grace which took place at the cross, when he blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us; he wishes to place it living and active before our eyes, and also the wonderful deeds of compassion that he showed when he assembled his disciples about him to establish the holy communion. For he not only wishes to renew and to strengthen the grace of forgiveness of sins through the communion, but he also wishes to show compassion to his own, and come to their help in their great need. He wishes to say to them (and to strengthen what he says by the fact that he imparts to them the blood of his covenant) that "he hath remembered his covenant forever." It shall not give way nor fall, though mountains give way and hills fall. If you are sincere in seeking grace *against* your sins, and compassion not only *in* your need but *against* it, you may be certain that the Lord will perform *for you* a wonderful deed of grace and compassion, as

you have here a memorial of the wonderful works which the gracious and compassionate God has wrought. For it is he who comes to you; he wishes to be united with you, in order to accomplish his work *in* you, as he has accomplished it *for* you. This is more important than that you should fix your mind on your thoughts and feelings. And if you see no way of accomplishing what you desire because you find no power within yourself, you should consider that these are the wonderful works that the Lord has made to be remembered as a pledge that when he imparts himself to you he will also accomplish his wonderful work in you. And it is his will that you should keep this in remembrance after the holy communion; if this is done—and it will be done, the more faithful you are in intercourse with the Lord through the Word and prayer—the memory of your Saviour will produce in you something besides mere pious feelings of a fleeting hour. Then it will be manifest that you have him in remembrance. Yes, if the memory of him causes you to bend your proud heart after the example of his meekness, your hard heart after his mildness, your passionate spirit after his gentleness, your selfish mind after his sacrificing mind of love—then you yourself will have a remembrance of his wonderful deeds of grace and compassion; and the more this is the case, the more perfectly will his object in the memorial of the holy communion be attained in you. But you still have many things to confess to him; yes, all must be revealed if all is to be forgiven. For whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. Amen.

XIII.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you."
(I. Corinthians XI., 24.)

So runs a part of the words instituting the holy communion, as they were uttered there in that hall in which the Lord Jesus had gathered his disciples about him to eat the last passover lamb with them; and so they sound to us to-day, as often as we approach the table of the Lord: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you."

As the whole intercourse with the disciples on that last evening is based on the love of God, so are also the words spoken at the institution of the holy communion, and every word spoken of it. Even to-day we see the fulfillment of what the Apostle John wrote as a superscription to his account of that last meeting of Jesus with his disciples: "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (John XIII., 1.) Let us write it upon our hearts that all that the Lord establishes never grows less nor fails, whatever may be the case with human affairs. And the Lord's purpose does not lose in strength and earnestness, neither does the blessing which he has in store grow less. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;" so, too, is he the same in his holy communion.

Let us, therefore, on this evening so rich in sacred memories, tarry with these words, simple, brief, and yet

*Delivered on Holy Thursday.

rich in eternal treasures and power: "Take; eat;" but let us tarry with prayer.

"Take:" so the Lord Jesus meets his disciples. They are poor, he is rich. They have nothing, he can give everything. Therefore *they* are to be the recipients, *he* will be the giver. He is always that; he is especially so here in the holy communion.

That is the first thing to which we must direct our attention. It is of the greatest importance what attitude we take toward the Lord in this regard—toward the Lord who meets us here. It is very characteristic of many communicants, especially on this occasion, when they come in greater numbers than usual, to prepare themselves by seeking something that they can bring to the Lord. And what is not sought for the hour of communion! All the godliness that we possess is sought out, even to the pious emotions, the devout frame of mind, the highly valued tears. Ah, that instead of these we would seek our sins, in order to confess them! But it is no wonder that we seek for something that we can give the Lord; it is characteristic of the whole attitude of our hearts to him, if we concern ourselves at all with him. But does the Lord come to receive something from us poor, sinful men? What have you to give him, especially so long as you have not given him your heart? And how is he to see that you intend to present this or that pious rubbish to him, when you are not willing to give him yourself? Will he not say, "Take that thine is, and go thy way?"

But with the disciples of Jesus, too, there is a deep-rooted notion that they are to bring something with them when they come to the Lord's table. And this false notion gives rise to another, equally false, respecting the

preparation for the holy communion—notions that may accompany one even to the table of the Lord, as though it were a matter of bringing something to God. No, it is he who gives, and you, you are to receive. He is the giver, wholly and entirely, and you are the receiver.

“Yes, but could every one come and take?” To be sure they might, if they could and would; if they were poor, so poor that they had nothing to give, so poor that they only desired to take; if they only had a longing for what the Lord Jesus has to give. This is the meaning of the verse, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

But the Lord says also, “Eat, this is my body, which was broken for you.” It is his body that he gives his disciples to eat, under the veil of bread. If bread can be a veil for the blessed word that sustains us, so that man lives not by bread alone, but by the Word of God contained therein; if it can be a bearer of the blessing of maintenance, why not also a bearer of the blessing of redemption, of the body of Christ? It is not this visible body, not flesh and blood that we can handle, that the Lord gives in his glorified body; but his body entirely spiritualized and permeated by the Holy Spirit, his spiritual body, which does not exclude the spiritual nature because it is a body, nor exclude the bodily because it is spiritual.

“There is an unutterable majesty in the word, a majesty of omnipotence, a majesty of love. As a mother nourishes her child with her own life, so Christ nourishes his own with his own life.” For the body he has given them to eat is that which was broken for them in the pangs of death, which was offered for them. The Lord makes a will, as one who must die, but also as he who shall live.

Because he must die, he makes the will; because he is to live, it avails and remains in force for time and eternity. And in the presence of the provisions of such a will, nothing becomes us but adoration.

The Lord gives his body, offered in death for us, his life sacrificed in death, that we may become participants in his death for the forgiveness of sins, "that in this sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation might be given us."

He gives to us, who have unholy flesh and blood in us, his holy flesh and blood, permeated by the Holy Spirit, in order to permeate with his holy body and its life-giving forces our whole being and spirit, soul and body, and to make it subject to himself. What a fulness is opened up before us through this imparting of his body in order to fill us! "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and as such he gives himself in the holy communion when he says, "eat, this is my body."

So he presents himself before you now, saying, "eat, this is my body." This indicates how he will let himself be appropriated by you, into what close communion with you he will enter. This is something quite different from a mere outward approach to the Holy One; to many, however, the communion is nothing else. Neither is it a merely outward appropriation of his word; no, it is the *eating* of his body, yes, of his body, yes, of himself, as he points out in the sixth chapter of John, with so many strong assurances to those who have asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (verse 52.) He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (Verses 55, 56.) He

desires his body to be our true food; he desires us to take it as nourishment for our inner man, that it may be nourished for eternal life. We are to be permitted so to appropriate to ourselves the Lord Jesus and his body that, just as bodily food agrees with our body, and it continually receives new strength and is renewed thereby, so also our inner man is renewed through his body, and, indeed, after his image; so entirely is our life to be dependent upon communion with him: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (Verse 57.)

And this food will nourish us just as bodily food, and under the same conditions. Bodily nourishment does not always impart special enjoyment: it satisfies, it quiets a longing, without our experiencing any special effect afterwards. The same is true of this nourishment, of the bread given by the Lord in the communion: we may not measure the blessing by our emotions of happiness at and after the partaking of the sacrament. These feelings can come; but they can also fail, without the one being a proof of a worthy, or the other of an unworthy, partaker of the sacred feast. All depends upon this: whether you hunger for this food, whether you hunger and thirst after righteousness, whether you have a desire for the Lord, so that you yearn for communion with him, open to him your whole being, in order to make room within you for his holy love and its reconciliation. That is the decisive point.

Must not this call forth earnest questions of self-examination among you, dear communicants? For when the Lord himself comes to you and says, "eat, this is my body," all depends upon the attitude of your heart to him. Are you really in such a relation to him that he is your food, that you can eat his body? or is your relation to the Lord

Jesus in your daily life only outward, so that you read his word, indeed, and also pray at times (if you do not even do this, how can you mingle with the disciples, like a Judas?)—but even if you enjoy some intercourse with him, but do not seek him from the heart, have no longing for him, do not hunger after him; if you are on the whole entirely contented with the world, yourself and your piety, and so are satisfied, while at the same time you are soul-sick, how can you come hither, where the Lord Jesus says, “take, eat?” How can you here receive him and his body as a food? You can receive him, undoubtedly, but to your hurt; as when a sick man desires to partake of strong food: it must produce an effect, which the Scripture indicates by the word “damnation;” you eat and dring damnation to yourself. The rich, the satisfied, the Lord sends away empty, while he fills the hungry with good things.

Yes, here are good things indeed for the hungry! These good things are the precious fruits of his sufferings and death, the holy, mighty forces that are in his glorified body, his divine strength of all sorts, that serves for life and godly conduct, all the good that you can wish for yourself and more than you can ask and devise. With this he is filled, and with it he desires to fill you; and he will give you these good things, you need only take them. He says, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” (Psalms LXXXI., 10.) “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, comè, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah LV., 1.)

And when you have thus taken and eaten, remain in quiet, that the heavenly food may perform its work in you;

for that it can and will do. We by no means wish to say that you are to rest exclusively: no, as bodily food gives strength for labor, so also does the spiritual food. So you are also to fashion your eternal bliss in true labor. The Lord desires to strengthen you for this with his food. Such effort has as its result new and greater hunger, and for every new and deeper hunger the Lord has new nourishment, until we become satisfied in the beholding of his face, when we awake with his likeness. Amen.

XIV.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." (Isaiah LIII., 10.)

We are especially reminded of these words of the prophet on these days on which we celebrate the remembrance of the suffering of our Lord. Surely it is the picture of the suffering Messiah that the prophet has beheld and depicted; and we find again all the marks of this suffering in our suffering Saviour, in him was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. This picture should be before our eyes especially as we approach his table this evening; but we also desire to hear what the Word of God

*Delivered on Holy Thursday.

tells us of the fruit and the end of Christ's passion, that we may be partakers of this fruit, and reach this end.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." The word "yet" refers back to all that the prophet has said on the point that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," as it recalls to us all that we hear during Passion Week and on Good Friday of the sufferings of Christ. Yes, he was wounded and bruised by men, by his own followers and by strangers. But behind their hands we catch sight of another hand that was lifted against him and fell heavily upon him. "It pleased *the Lord*," says the prophet, "to bruise him; he hath put him to grief;" or, "his blows give pain." What pained the most in these blows was not what the body but what the soul had to suffer—from God and from the Divine condemnation of our trespasses and sins. But why these blows from the hand of God? Ah, because he is to be a *sin-offering* and give himself as such, a sacrifice for sin, and to atone for sin; for that was the purpose of the sin-offering. To this end the Lord Jesus was chosen as the Lamb of God, and for this he has given himself: "He gave his life an offering for sin."

"Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,

All our sins on Thee were laid;

By almighty love anointed,

Thou hast full atonement made:

All Thy people are forgiven

Through the virtue of thy blood;

Open'd is the gate of heaven;

Peace is made 'twixt man and God."

And what now is the fruit of this sacrifice of Christ, made once for all? The prophet depicts it in the words, "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed," or offspring; or, as the twenty-second Psalm expresses it, "A seed shall serve him." (Verse 30.)

"He shall prolong his days;" "for in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (Romans VI., 10.)

And on the basis of all this it can be said, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Let us now stop to consider what these words mean in and for themselves, and also what they have to tell us at this time especially.

We should know the pleasure of the Lord. God's purposes are not dark secrets; no, he has revealed them. God's original design was, that we should be partakers of his nature, as also of his glory and his blessedness. But God's plans, his "gifts and calling," are not of the kind that cause him to repent (Romans XI., 29); he does not abandon them. Hence, when God's original plan had been thwarted by our sin, and we had become unfit to fulfill his plans and his calling, he placed our lost cause in the hands of his Son, as the Saviour himself says in his high-priestly prayer: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John XVII., 2); and the Apostle John says, in his first epistle, chapter four, verses nine and ten, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him * * * * and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He has also taken in hand our cause, given his life as a sin offering and himself as a ransom, reconciled us with God, and suffered for sins, "the

just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;" "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. And has reconciled us by the body of his flesh through death until he present us holy and blameless and without blemish before him."

Behold, this is God's plan for us which Christ Jesus has carried out. It has passed through his hands; and after he had fulfilled all that pertained to it, the Father raised him, that he who now liveth forever may, on the ground of his eternal priesthood, "save to the uttermost;" that is, may accomplish God's plan in all who come unto God through him, in all who put their case in his hands: for, as he has died for them, so "he ever liveth and maketh intercession for them." Everything, his life as well as his death, has as its aim the consummation of God's purposes with us. But it is brought about by his hands, singly and alone. It prospers in his hands only, not in ours, for we are unfit for it; we must be saved by grace, not of ourselves. Therefore he extends his hand in his word and sacraments, to lead us back to God, to restore the image of God in us. Moreover, he instituted his holy communion in order to extend to us his saving hand in and by means of it, and to further and carry out the pleasure of the Lord in us.

As, in the case of the whole human race, this process must be accompanied by reconciliation with God, since God could interfere for our salvation only on the basis of such a reconciliation, so in the case of individual men, forgiveness of sins must pave the way from his heart to the heart of God. And therefore, when the Lord wishes to carry out his purposes in the communion, he comes with

forgiveness of sins, and thus opens the way between your heart and the heart of God. But this is not the only good thing with which he comes; after he has thus opened the way of approach to God through forgiveness, the precious forgiveness of sins, he also desires to impart power and life, yea, yea, to impart himself as the Bread of Life, and the power of his Holy Spirit to a new life in love; yes, he wishes to transform us by the power of his grace, to renew us and change us into his likeness. For that is God's pleasure with us in Christ Jesus. Only in and through him can God's plan be consummated and crowned with success; only in the hand of Jesus.

Behold, God's purpose in Christ also meets you here in the holy communion. So he extends his gracious hand to you also, that he may carry it out in you.

But, dear soul, do you meet this purpose half way? Is your aim in coming to the Lord's table of a kind that agrees with the plan of God? Otherwise all is in vain; yes, not only that, but it redounds to your shame that you come to the table of the Lord. Therefore test your purpose in partaking of the holy communion. What is your object in going to the communion table to-day? we ask you in the Lord's name. But remember that all depends upon your inner purpose. Have you become one with God in this purpose of yours, so that you seek the Lord Jesus here in order to draw nigh to God through him, and to become a pardoned man through his grace and spirit, a holy man, created and daily renewed in the image of God and in likeness with your Saviour? Is it thus? How many motives for celebrating the holy communion are advanced, especially on Holy Thursday! One does not wish to break entirely with Christianity and the established custom; one

desires to place himself in a solemn frame of mind, in order to live therein for a time and thus to palliate the worldliness in himself and others; or he may desire something more: he may wish to honor the Lord, or to ease his conscience by the forgiveness of sins, in order thereafter to feel entirely released and free from the Lord; or do you wish to have the forgiveness of your sins, and nothing else? Dear friend, do not meet the Lord in this way and go counter to his loving purpose. Your aim may succeed in a certain sense, but only to your hurt; the Lord cannot show you his grace as he might.

And yet he desires nothing else than that you acquiesce in his loving design, and place all your affairs in his hands. What would be more natural with our whole aim, our whole desire. The more entirely this is the case, the more a man with a whole desire of his heart presses toward the goal to which the Lord has called us, the more will he perceive and know that he cannot reach this goal in his own strength, that his affairs will only be undone in his own hands, and that they can prosper only in the hands of Jesus. Such a man finds it precious to continually sink himself anew with his purpose in the purpose of God as it is advanced in Christ and as it still advances in all those who give themselves into his hands, who place themselves and all that concerns them in the hands of their Saviour. He has extended them upon the cross; here he stretches them also toward us. He has given his life as a sacrifice for sin, but he still liveth. As the one "who liveth and was dead," he meets us in the communion. Those who have been justified through his blood, will much more be saved through his life. Ah, that all of you, dear communicants, might acquiesce in God's purpose in the death of Christ

and in the holy communion, that it may fulfill its purpose in you also, to your soul's salvation. Amen.

XV.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"I thirst." (John XIX., 28.)

So runs, as we know, one of the "words," significant and precious for time and for eternity, spoken by our Saviour on the cross. As in the words spoken just previously he had given expression to the deepest suffering of soul, so in this utterance the most severe bodily suffering is indicated. When Jesus knew that all was fulfilled that had been written of him except the one thing that is spoken of in the sixty-ninth Psalm, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," (verse 21), he said, "I thirst," that this prophecy just quoted might also be fulfilled. And why should he not feel the pangs of mortal thirst, he who must profess of himself, according to another prophecy, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." (Psalms XXII., 15.) At the beginning of his ministry he had once felt the pangs of hunger; now he must also experience those of thirst. But he knew also that refreshment was allotted to him in this deadly thirst,

*Delivered on Holy Thursday.

according to the prophecy before quoted; and so. he can say, "I thirst."

"The first word he utters in the full knowledge that now, after all was fulfilled, he is king in the kingdom of grace, is an imploring complaint, like the speech of a beggar." He placed his confidence that a drink would be given him in his father, according to the word of prophecy; but as an angel might strengthen him in Gethsemane, so here man may offer him the last refreshing drink, which is nevertheless embittered by a taunt, tempered with compassion. There is also in this appeal a silent call to those who surround his cross. He turns with it to those who have turned away from him: it is a prayer to them.

But is there not still more in this expression? Should it not bring to expression something more than a mere desire for a drink? Is it not rather indicated that it is the suffering Saviour who turns to sinners with this word?

For what, then, did the Lord Jesus thirst? Not only for the living God but also for those whom he had come to seek and to save; it was a thirst to unite us, who were separated from God, again to him,—a thirst for our souls. If it had been his meat to do his Father's will as he sought out a lost sheep, when he brought the Samaritan woman to herself,—should it not also be his drink, that for which he thirsted, to create a thirst for the living God in a human soul, and to satisfy it with herself? He who is himself the living water, faints in thirst that he may give living water to those who must otherwise faint in spirit. And not only at that time did the Lord thirst: do not his sufferings and death, his last words and their purport, stand before our souls, living and present and always effective, if we at this time understand the proclama-

tion of his passion, and especially if he draws so near to us in the holy communion? Do we not still hear from his mouth the words, "I thirst" as a silent and yet impressive prayer to us from the lips of the dying Saviour? Do you not hear this prayer as one directed to you, dear Christian? With this prayer the Lord would awaken in your soul thirst for him, for the living God to whom he desires to lead you back by means of his sufferings and death.

There is no man who has no thirst; no one among you does not thirst in soul; but do you also thirst for the living God? There are springs full of holes, that give forth no water; human souls are seeking, many of them to quench their thirst therefrom. Are *you* drinking from such a spring? or more precisely, are you still seeking to slake your thirst at them? Hear him who calls, "I thirst for your soul," and who desires thereby to create a thirst for the living water. His thirst for you is an earnest, heartfelt longing for your soul; he therefore desires to find such a thirst in you also, a heartfelt longing for him. He is not contented with less, for unless this thirst is within you, his thirst for you will not be satisfied. Of what value, then, is this sip at the fountain of grace if we have no thirst for the living water that gushes forth from it? Ah, dear Christian, what is gained by hearing God's word and by coming to the Lord's table a few times a year, if you are in reality thirsting for quite other things than those the Lord has to give, and are remaining with your soul—thirst beside the springs full of holes? Do you not understand that with your divided heart you not only deny your Saviour his refreshing, but also mock his cry and entreaty, "I thirst?" But not only that: the thirst of your soul which you now repress will some day awaken. Some day you, too, will

cry, "I thirst;" but if you do not permit yourself to be converted by the Lord you will ask in vain for something to cool your parched tongue, therefore I ask and exhort you in the name of your suffering Saviour, and here at his table: prove yourselves, and permit yourselves to be touched by this word from the cross; and resolve, here at his altar, to be true to your thirsty soul, true to the Saviour who thirsts for your soul.

Then, too, when a heartfelt desire for the Lord is awakened in the human heart, he desires by his "I thirst" to rouse a still more ardent longing for him. How many ungodly desires and worldly lusts there are, too, in such a man, striving to weaken and destroy the longing for God. How much imperfection, sloth, indifference and many other evils has the upright soul to condemn itself for, on earnest self-examination! How much that is not of God is also within you; how much that strives against the mind of your Saviour. And now, when you hear him say, "I thirst," should not this word of ardent longing penetrate your innermost being and arouse therein an eager desire to surrender yourself completely to him, with all that is in and of you, and thereafter heartily to thirst for him and long to possess him, to know him, to become like him in his death, to die to the world with him and live unto God? As long as he has not been able to draw you to himself, with all your thirst and all your longing and desires, the refreshing for which he thirsts has not fallen to his lot. Therefore let this imploring petition of his awaken in you a thirst for him such as he feels for you.

But your Lord and Saviour does not only wish to create a thirst within you; he is also able and willing happily and gloriously to slake it. Or should he who implor-

ingly cries, "I thirst" not answer you, when in your soul thirst you turn to him with your entreaty? Should not he who thirsts for your soul be ready to quench the thirst of your soul? Should not the fact that your Saviour longs for you be a refreshing cordial for your heart, hungering for grace? Is not this desire of his for you a response to your desire for him, and a response that gives assurance that your thirst will be quenched, your longing appeased? And he is not only willing but able to do this: "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah LIII., 11). His "it is finished"—should it not allay your thirst? Is not everything that your heart can wish comprehended in it? and is it not this that he desires to give you? has he not gained it for you? And does he not thirst for your soul because he would fain bestow upon your soul all the good that he has prepared for you? Has he not opened a fountain of grace for you through his suffering and death—a fountain having abundance of water? And it is not enough that he has won righteousness and life and invited you to it; but that you may know that it belongs to you and be quite sure that it is yours, he meets you here at his holy table and with his holy gift opens to you the living fountain which flows with forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, that you may drink and quench your thirst.

"I thirst, says the Lord. If your heart, too, says, "I thirst, I long for the Lord," then he comes to you, and you to him—and you meet at the fountain. And there he says, "Take and drink. This cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." And then you receive the living water to drink.

Therewith he admits you to his communion that you may be sanctified by the drinking of his blood, cleansed from your sin, and ever renewed in his knowledge and likeness. Thus will he give you the water of life freely.

“Give me to drink:” thus spake the Saviour to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, and added, “if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

Yes, if you knew the gift of the communion, and who it is who here says, “I thirst,” you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water. What purpose you have in coming now to the communion table, only the Lord knows, before whom you have come with your confession. May you reveal to him the condition of your heart. Amen.

XVI.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” (Matthew XVII., 8.)

With these words the evangelist Matthew closes his account of the transfiguration of Jesus. With this the transfiguration had reached its close. But since we are now to consider, not what occurred outwardly at the transfiguration of Christ upon the mountain, but rather the

*Delivered on the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

transfiguration that occurs even to-day, when the Lord Jesus is transfigured before man, we may say that this transfiguration takes place in the soul when we see no man save Jesus only.

But where is the Mount of Transfiguration, where we see no man save Jesus only?

It is where we permit ourselves inwardly to be taken apart from the world by the Lord Jesus, so that we seek Jesus only in the Word.

In the midst of the world's turmoil the Lord cannot glorify himself before the soul. There, his glory is hidden by the false glory of the world, so that we do not find in him that which pleases us, even though we at the same time have sometimes a presentiment and feeling that the glory of the world is not genuine.

Yet it is not intended that man should flee from the world and the things that may be necessary to his station and calling; but he is to permit himself to be taken in his inmost being, with his heart and its desires, so that it shall be directed to the Lord and see him alone. If with this disposition we go to the Scriptures with him alone, we are upon the mount of transfiguration. And if we do not as yet see his whole glory, but it falls upon our eyes in isolated rays at first, through the delightful emotions of the call, yet we are on the way to the mount of transfiguration.

The mount of transfiguration is where, after we have become conscious of our sins, we lift our eyes in faith and look toward the grace of Jesus.

He who thus lets himself be taken apart by the Lord Jesus into the Word, and lets His Spirit work in him, will become conscious of his sins, as the publican had become conscious of his when he did not dare to lift up his eyes,

but smote upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But it is not to have its satisfaction there. The Holy Spirit then desires to glorify Jesus to such a soul, and to teach such a man to lift up his eyes in faith, so that he no more looks to himself and the multitude of his sins or the deep corruption of his heart, but upward, to Jesus alone and his grace. Then he does not rely upon his own works, but upon him who justifies the ungodly. And if he lifts up his eyes in faith, he sees no man but Jesus only: the atonement of Jesus as the only ground of his pardon; the merit of Jesus as the only ground of his trust; the wounds of Jesus as his only refuge; the grace of Jesus as the only rock of his salvation. And when one sees nothing more than Jesus, he is on the mount of transfiguration.

The mount of transfiguration is where we look about for no other but the Lord Jesus.

The disciples had seen the brightness of Jesus' countenance; they had seen his raiment white as snow; they had heard Moses and Elias talking with him; and Peter had called out, "Lord, it is good to be here," etc. But soon all that they had seen and heard had vanished, and when they lifted up their eyes they saw no man but Jesus only.

To be sure, the faithful do not get a sight of what the disciples saw on the mount of transfiguration, but still they may see and experience precious things if they turn their gaze in faith to Jesus only. Then they, too, can say, "Lord, it is good to be here." And they would fain build tabernacles upon the mount.

But alas, the delightful experiences by which they are inspired at such moments, very soon vanish; the radiance fades, the heavenly voices are silent, and we see and hear nothing more of all the blessed. But as the disciples were

still upon the mount of transfiguration, even when the great glory had vanished, so we too, may be with Jesus upon the mount if we see and feel nothing more than Jesus alone, without seeing and feeling. Yes, it is indeed a transfiguration of Jesus if we learn to care no more for what we feel, but in opposition to what we see and feel, direct our eye of faith on nothing but Jesus only, in his word and his promises, and do not permit ourselves to be misled by the fact that so much of that which has filled our hearts with joy has vanished, and we have nothing but Jesus only, the word only; and we desire to see and to feel nothing else, but in faith to lay hold of Jesus, singly and alone.

The mount of transfiguration is where *in prayer* we regard nothing but Jesus only.

The evangelist Luke reports that Jesus had taken his disciples upon the mountain *to pray*. And it is said by him that "as he prayed" he was transfigured. Accordingly the transfiguration occurred during intercourse with the Father; and consequently his own glorification as well as his transfiguration before the disciples stood in the closest connection with prayer.

Prayer is always closely connected with transfiguration; we may say that it leads up to the mount of transfiguration. But this is by no means the case with all that we call prayer: much of it is not prayer at all. But when we see Jesus only in prayer, as we pray in his name and for his sake, there is a mount of transfiguration. That is a prayer in the name of Jesus when we pray as if in him; when we base our prayer upon his reconciling grace and in it have in mind only his will and his kingdom.

A godly man says of such a prayer, in which one sees Jesus only: "It is a precious thing when the devout soul

directs in prayer the lifted eyes of faith to Jesus alone, and does not look about upon its own distracted thoughts, nor behind it to Satan, who says that its prayer is in vain, nor within, upon its own lukewarmness and imperfect devotion, but up to Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us." By such a paryer we ascend the mount of transfiguration.

The mount of transfiguration is where we see Jesus only in all that happens.

The disciples had not yet learned this when they were with him upon the mount. They had not yet comprehended the suffering of Christ, nor his glorification. But afterwards they reached a point where they saw Jesus in everything. They perceived his divine ordinance in everything, regarded everything as sent from him, understood that all lay in his hand. On this account they could bear all things patiently and with thanksgiving.

It is a great thing when we can see Jesus only in all that occurs to us, be it joy or sorrow, when we can receive all from his hand, bear all for his sake and be thankful, and know that all is for the best.

There is so much in the world that will harrass and mislead our hearts, both in respect to ourselves and to the kingdom of God in general. But if in the midst of all this perplexity we can lift our eyes so as to see Jesus only in everything, a marvellously refulgent light falls upon all things. Then do we find ourselves upon the mount of transfiguration.

To this mount the Lord desires to direct his children. Yes, one day he will lead them to that mount of transfiguration, whence they will descend no more. Until that time,

it suffices that he direct our steps to the mount of which we have been speaking.

The holy communion is an especially blessed means whereby the Lord draws to himself and takes us along with him upon the mount of transfiguration.

If you as a disciple of Jesus look to him in the Word, so that you deem it your highest good to receive him as your Saviour, then you may be certain that he will draw to you in the communion, so that you may be nearer to him.

If your sin and the corruption of your heart gives you concern, and you long to be able to lift up your eyes in faith, he will kindle and strengthen your faith in the holy communion. Here in the communion you have to look to Jesus only. Yes, through it he wishes to awaken this faith in you, so that your inner eye may remain unalterably fixed upon him; upon his grace, over against your sins; upon his strength, over against your weakness. But do not wait that you may through the holy communion build tabernacles in feelings of happiness. It is possible that they will come; but at any rate they will soon vanish. But you have not for that reason descended from the mount of transfiguration; no, you will rather ascend higher, if you learn to have faith without sight, to look in pure faith to Jesus only.

And if your faith in Jesus alone is thus increased in the holy communion, you will also be able to look to Jesus alone in prayer also, if you permit yourself to be impelled to ascend the mount of transfiguration in incessant prayer.

Thus, as you are borne by your Saviour in his holy communion far above all the heights of earth, you will also be able to see Jesus better in all things, because everything

is transfigured in the light of his name. Yes, all shall be glorified, even death: for the Lord says, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

It may be that you are now casting down your eyes in grief and shame over your sins; yes, humble yourself deeply, that after you have heard the word of absolution, you may lift them and see no man, save Jesus only. Amen.

XVII.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation VI., 14.)

The seventh chapter of Revelation admits us to the presence of the holy God, and before his throne. The Apostle John sees "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues," standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Then he asked one of the elders, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" And he received the answer, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple," etc.

When mention is here made of the robes which the

*Delivered on the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

saints had on, we are not only to think of the white garments with which their glorified bodies were clothed, if we must think at all of clothes in the ordinary sense, but also of the inner condition of these saints, of the state of their souls in the eyes of God.

We have souls altogether unclean and polluted, unclean because of the inborn corruption of our natures, polluted by many sins. With such robes we cannot enter the presence of the holy God. We need marriage garments, white robes. But how are they to be obtained? "They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb," is said of the saints, and there is no other means of making them white. But how does this washing take place? It occurs when a man has his eyes opened by the Holy Spirit, so that he sees and knows his sins, and confesses them before God; yes, sees and knows them in such a way that his chief aim is to purify himself; because he is well aware that his sinfulness is daily revealed more clearly to God. Therefore he goes in faith to him whom God has placed upon a mercy seat through faith in his blood. Thus he becomes clean; thus he is washed from all uncleanness; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses him from all sin. Whoever is thus washed, is clean indeed.

So have they done who stand before the throne of God; and whoever has not thus washed in the blood of Christ, cannot join the great multitude of the saints.

But not only is it said, "they have washed their robes;" but also, "they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

A garment or a piece of linen can be cleansed from soil, and yet need to be bleached before it is dazzling white. This is done, as you know, by washing it repeatedly in

strong lye, and exposing it to the light of the sun; in this way the material is made white. Something similar has occurred with these, and must occur with us: "they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Do you understand this? Through forgiveness of sins a man is washed, he is justified in Jesus' blood, his sin is covered. But the material must be bleached after it has been washed, that all impurity be removed, so must the corruption, the sin that still inheres in us, be eaten away. Washing takes place through the forgiveness of sins in justification; the making white of robes, through daily revival in the work of sanctification. These are frequently associated, as for example in I. John I., 9, and Psalms LI., 4.

But the one, like the other, takes place only in the blood of Jesus, in the power of Jesus' blood. It can not only take away the guilt of sin; it has also the power to destroy sin itself. Where his might is permitted to enter the soul it can eradicate all the stains of sin. We shall never reach the point where we can say, "we have no sin;" but it is certain that the power of Christ's grace and blood is greater than the sin that still cleaves to you. "Hence we are to lay hold of the Lamb, become really acquainted with him, and allow the evidence of the great value of his blood to penetrate our hearts, that we may gain trust in God and a childlike dependence upon him, and may lift up our eyes to him."

When it is said that the saints wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, it is clear that it was not something that occurred but once, but that it had continued through their whole life. The washing in the blood of Christ must be repeated continually. "He

that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit;" but the washing of feet, that is, the daily forgiveness of sin, is indispensable. We need a daily and a rich forgiveness of sins, as the Holy Spirit forgives all sin daily and richly.

And none the less must this making white of robes in the blood of the Lamb be put into daily practice, so that as often as you feel your inner corruption, in pride, envy, carnal and earthly mind, selfishness, anger, idleness, indifference, and the like, you go against them as foes who strive against your soul. But not in your own strength, for it can do nothing, and only leaves behind it despondency and hopelessness of ever getting our robes white, or leads to indifference respecting the sins that still cleave to us. No, you will succeed only in the blood of Jesus, and then not without struggle and persevering patience. Linen does not become white without trouble; neither can our robes be made white in the blood of the Lamb without effort. Against the sins that are continually coming against you, you must enter into grace, and let the blood of Christ penetrate into you as deeply as sin has penetrated. Besides, you will need constant faith and prayer; but the blood of Christ gains the victory.

Therefore the Lord in his word commends the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which frees from all sin him who walks in the light. And for that reason the Lord Jesus Christ himself comes in his communion with his holy, precious blood, for the washing and cleansing of your robes. Yes, he before whose throne the perfected spirits stand, the Lamb, about whom the saints congregate, he to whom they all sing praises because they are indebted to him for everything—he, the Saviour, comes here with the

same precious blood in which they have washed their robes, that we, too, may wash our robes and make them white. His communion is to serve as a preparation here below for the great communion in heaven.

But, dear soul, are you really sensible of the utter depravity of your nature? Have you learned that you can be washed clean by nothing else than the blood of the Lamb? Are you among those who have been cleansed? And are you daily asking forgiveness of sin from your Saviour? Here you will find it; he will wash your feet.

But remission of sins brings with it also the desire to be cleansed from all defilement of body and of spirit. Have you such a desire? Do you see the uncleanness on the robe of your soul? Have you become conscious of the corruption that still dwells within you, and are you struggling against it? There is no one among you in whom this impurity is not still at hand and manifest, these dark spots on your life and character. Doubtless they are as evident to others. Are you diligently endeavoring to make your robes white, in so far as they are not so now? Do you desire to take up the battle with sin? Perhaps your hands have already become weary in the conflict, and been allowed to fall; perhaps you think that it is not worth while to wish to make your robes white, to become holy, because, as you think, your sanctification is not progressing. Then be incited and encouraged by your Saviour's visit to you in the holy communion. Take up the battle anew! But take it up in the strength of the blood of Jesus; it alone can gain the victory. Appeal to it and its power, against the power of the sins which you feel, against Satan's representations that it is fruitless to wish to become holy, and against the lust and the fear of your heart.

If, dear Christian, you feel in your soul quiet but powerful movings, movings of the power of the blood of Christ, mark them well. Strengthen yourself by the blessed consciousness that you have received the precious blood of your Redeemer; plunge into it; let its power penetrate your inmost being and give opportunity for it to accomplish its work there; then your robes, too, will become as white as those of the saints. They no more need to confess their sins, they did that here; but you have need of it, therefore open all that is within you to the influx of the power of Christ's blood, as you now in his holy presence confess your sins. Amen.

XVIII.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

In the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew it is recorded that when Jesus left the house of Jairus, whose little daughter he had raised from the dead, two blind men followed him, who cried and said, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." When he came into the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus said to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said unto him, "Yea, Lord." Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." And their eyes were opened. (Matthew IX., 27-30.)

Let us in this hour of devotion fix our attention upon *the cry* of these blind men, as an example of a *right frame*

of mind for the confession, and the answer of Jesus, as typical of that which he to-day, in the midst of the absolution and at the communion, gives to those who come before him in such a frame of mind.

That these blind men deemed their need to be great, is not wonderful. The blind man is shut out from the sun and light of the world as in a dark chamber. All that delights our eyes is to him as though it did not exist at all. He can not meet the eye of another, nor can he behold the love and friendship reflected therein.

And yet there is a spiritual condition that is immeasurably more deplorable: when a man is blind to the spiritual, heavenly, eternal world, so that he sees nothing of its glory, the sun and the light of it does not reach his eyes, he cannot behold the face of the Lord.

Is this condition familiar to us? If you still find yourselves in it, you certainly have reason to cry for mercy, that you may receive sight. And if you do so, it is evidence that a glimmer of light has already reached you.

But even if you could truthfully say that your eyes had been opened, would you not still have every reason for joining in this cry, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me?" For how much blindness still exists, even among those whose eyes have been opened in the main thing. If faith is the eye that sees invisible things and brings them near; if it is the eye that intercepts the light from above and meets the visage of the Lord Jesus Christ—O, why is your sight so dim! How little you still have of that vision that sees things invisible! How far away lies that invisible world that might be so near you! How little you see of that which is eternal! And how little clearness there is in your vision of the face of Jesus Christ and of your knowl-

edge of him, in which you might be so rich! Should not this impel you to cry, "O, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me?"

And it is not that which you already see—what you see in yourself, what you have already discovered of sin and guilt, of the corruption and misery of your heart—is not that of such a kind that have good reason to call for mercy?

How much grace might you not have experienced! So much that you might now be a perfect man, a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. But what are you? What have you become? How much has the grace of God that bringeth salvation been able to effect in you?

We think that these and other questions of self-examination must force from you the cry of distress that the two blind men called after the Lord.

And how much in earnest they were with their call! The Saviour seemed to have passed by; but they followed him to the house he entered, and caused their cry to resound, even there. Are you so much in earnest with your cry of need that you not only bemoan your distress inwardly at times, and then let the matter rest, but pursue him with your calls, as it were, even to the house where he is stopping? If so, do not cease to call for mercy and penetrate even unto his presence.

If you come into God's house with such a cry in your hearts and press with your prayer even to the mercy seat and to the communion-table, then you are in the right frame of mind for the confession. Then, too, you will also receive a favorable answer.

In this prayer of yours there is not only humble ac-

knowledge of your misery, but a little spark of faith is also hidden in it. Such a faith was expressed in the prayer of the blind men when they called on Jesus as the son of David; for they thereby acknowledged him to be the promised Messiah, the helper in every time of need. As such he had already made himself known in Israel.

And how have we learned to know him in word and deed? Therefore he can ask after our faith still more if we draw near to him. Jesus said to the blind men, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" So, too, he asks you who are calling for mercy. Do you believe that he is able to do this? Do you believe that he can open your eyes? Do you believe that he can do great things in you, that he can cleanse, heal, change and renew your sinful heart?

And if you answer him with a "Yea, Lord," he, too, will answer you in grace. Yes, even if you must answer, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," he has yet a gracious answer ready for you. For a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.

Let us therefore consider the answer which the Lord gave the two blind men, as typical of the answer which he gives to those who come before him in a right attitude of mind for the confession.

"Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you." Jesus was pleased with the fact that they at least believed in him, and had confidence that he could open their eyes. We, too, cannot honor him better than by faith, and by trust and confidence. In every time of need we are to have confidence that he *can* help, and also *will* help, so far as is needful and expedient; and knowledge of his omnipotence and goodness is necessary to such a faith. But when sin oppresses us, and we are

anxious about our soul's salvation and have a longing desire to be justified and sanctified, then we must see in him the Redeemer, the Mediator, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," and believe that as such he can do for us that for which we pray, and give us that for which we seek." Therefore he still answers, "According to your faith be it unto you."

But is there not such an answer in the words of absolution that are pronounced here in his name and at his command? Does not this word free every penitent sinner from his sins? Is not all this in the reply, "According to your faith be it unto you?"

But that is not the entire answer of the Lord to those who cry for mercy. The reply of Jesus to the blind men did not consist in words alone: he answered them by a gracious act. He touched their eyes, and they were opened.

Such an answer will he give you also. He will deal with you at his communion table according to his grace. And not only will he touch you at this table: no, he will enter into you. And if his touch helped the blind men to sight, how much more will his coming to you and his reconciliation with you avail for the restoration of your inner man? If he gives you his body and his blood he will, in just as powerful and gracious a way touch your heart. Then should not such a touch have as its result the opening of your eyes, just as the bodily eyes of those blind men were opened? And was not that your desire? Is it not your blindness for which you seek help? Have you not desired him to open your eyes, that you might know him better, and strive with more constant heart

after that which is invisible, that you may see it in faith with clearer vision? Your Saviour will bestow this upon you in the holy communion. In reference to this he says, "According to your faith be it unto you." How often has our vision of the Lord and our outlook upon heavenly things become clearer after we have been at the Lord's table. "Yes," you say, "I have often experienced that; but soon the vision became dim again." Alas, yes; but was not that often because you did not make sufficient effort to keep it clear by frequent intercourse with the Lord in his Word and in prayer? But we must also not forget that the Lord calls his own ever anew to his table, because they continually need to have their eyes opened and their vision sharpened. Meanwhile, your longing to find grace and to obtain mercy may become all the greater. Then call so much the more from the depths, "O, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." May the Lord hear this call in your confession of sin, that he may give you a gracious answer. Amen.

XIX.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared." (Psalms CXXX., 4.)

In the one hundred thirtieth Psalm we hear David crying out of the depths, that the Lord had marked his iniquities, had plunged him into the depths; he felt that God

did not hear his prayers. So he prayed, "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." And he knew God as the Lord God of the Covenant, before whom no one can stand, but who will nevertheless not condemn finally, "for," he says, "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared."

On another occasion we have seen how man is driven into the depths of spiritual poverty when God imputes sin to his conscience. This occurs on his first repentance, but it is repeated later. Even the man of faith is brought ever anew into the depths of his heart and likewise into the depths of spiritual poverty, so that he must cry like David.

But as David does not remain in the depths of distress, but lays hold of the covenant grace of God, so God desires that you, too, should not remain in distress, if you have humbled yourselves contritely before the Lord and called upon his name. Therefore, before we go to his table, we wish to consider these words more carefully, that thereby we may penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of the holy communion.

"There is forgiveness with thee." It is consoling to see how all the saints of God have had recourse to forgiveness. They had no other way of escape from the distress of their sins. So, too, the church of Christ has from the beginning expressed its faith in the forgiveness of sins: "We believe * * * in the forgiveness of sins."

It is still more comforting that the Lord himself has taught us to *pray* for the forgiveness of sins as often as we appear before him. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;" so he does not wait until his saints are sinless. But it is still more consoling when he testifies in his Word that there is forgiveness with him; he does so in

these words of David, "But there is forgiveness with thee." David is speaking by the Spirit of God; and long before David's time God, through the mouth of his servant Moses, permitted himself to be called a God "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus XXXIV., 7.) What can be more sure than what God himself testifies of himself? And what is there more consoling for us, as if God himself tells very explicitly how he is disposed, than the Psalmist's declaration that there is forgiveness with him.

Yet there is something that can assure us of forgiveness still more than this: it is the institution of the holy communion.

We who live in the New Testament times know that forgiveness is of God and upon the ground of the atonement in Christ. He has gained forgiveness for us with his precious blood. And he has entered into the heavenly sanctuary to be our advocate with the Father. Because he who has won atonement for our sins is with the Father, forgiveness from God is for all who seek it through Christ.

But how difficult it can be for a poor human heart that groans under its weight of sin, to lay hold of this forgiveness, to believe in it heartily. The sun still shines in the sky, even when it is entirely concealed by black clouds; so the sun of grace still beams forth forgiveness upon us, even when heavy dark clouds oppress the soul. And if the sun of grace is not entirely obscured by clouds, still a certain clouding of the sky—such as so easily arises from the corruption of our hearts—can make it very difficult to hold fast to our confidence that the sun still shines, that there is forgiveness with God.

Therefore the Lord, in his great grace, has instituted the holy communion, that he might come very near us with the grace of remission of sins. For in the holy communion he comes with forgiveness just as surely as he comes with his blood, of which he said at the institution of the communion that it was "shed for the forgiveness of sins."

A renewed and strengthened forgiveness is one of the precious fruits of the holy communion. And "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

With the Lord is forgiveness, *that he may be feared*. But does not God forgive sin so that he need *not* be feared? and is it said here nevertheless that he forgives, that he may be feared? Both are true: there is a fear that the Lord wishes to tear from the heart by forgiveness; but there is also a fear that the Lord wishes to give in and through forgiveness.

When a man has been aroused from his slumber of sin, and has felt God's wrath at sin in his conscience, his heart is filled with fear. Something servile comes into his whole being. As long as his eyes have not been opened to the grace of God in Christ, he works and troubles himself in his own strength, but under constant fear and in a slavish spirit.

The Lord wishes to expell this spirit of fear and slavishness. And it yields by faith to the forgiveness of sins. Then we receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit or adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

But it is said that with God is forgiveness, that he may be feared. What kind of fear is this? It is the fear of the

child for the parent, which is sacred; not a fear that keeps the soul far from God, in continual anxiety and unrest, but a fear that causes one to cleave to God. "That he may be feared" includes in itself a whole correct Christian life. For this fear sustains trust in God; it includes obedience and fear of sin; it keeps the heart in the proper bounds; it brings man into right relations with God.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared," is not to be understood simply as if the fear of God were only a consequence of the forgiveness of sins; no, it is the end and aim of it. The Lord forgives sins that he may be feared. He wishes to bring us into right relations with him; but that can be done in no other way and manner than by his forgiving our sins. Without the forgiveness of sins, man's life is either a carnal life without law, or a life of bondage under the law.

Therefore the honesty or dishonesty of the heart is to be distinguished by whether a man simply seeks forgiveness in order to be freed from his guilt and from his fear before God, that he may feel free and untrammelled; or whether he seeks it in order to come into right relations to God and to walk in obedience to him.

A fearful soul dares not lay hold on forgiveness or appropriate it freely as it is offered in the Word, in absolution and in the communion, because it fears to be deceived by a false trust; and so, by such fear, one is kept in continual uncertainty, and never attains a steadfast faith and a childlike spirit. But if it is your greatest desire to come into right relations to God in the forgiveness of sins, and so to walk in obedience to him, then you may be sure that there is forgiveness with God, the forgiveness of your sins,

and that you may have confidence in the gracious forgiveness of all your sins as it is announced to you in the absolution and assured in the communion. You have the forgiveness of your sins whether you feel it or not; your own heart cannot say yes or no to it. The forgiveness of sins that Jesus has won by his precious blood is yours, as surely as the blood of Christ is yours in the communion. You have nothing to do but to appropriate it, to continue to believe in it and live in it, and to walk in childlike fear and childlike obedience.

As certainly as such forgiveness is renewed and confirmed in the holy communion, so certainly will the Lord also renew and confirm in you the disposition that will enable you to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, and through the spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. So this is an additional blessing of the holy communion that you are strengthened in your inner man and that your faith becomes strong through the knowledge and experience of all the good things that are in Christ.

On the other hand, there is no such blessing in the communion for you who seek here nothing else than to be freed from trouble of conscience over your sins, careless of how you come into communion with God, and walk in his fear and in obedience to him. You seek forgiveness, not that you may fear him, but in order to escape from all fear of God. Therefore your celebration of the communion does not bring you nearer the Lord, but you are continually going farther from him.

Therefore, dear soul, you should take good care, when you come before the Lord with your confession of sin, that you can make the words of David your own: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear

my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Yes, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." (Psalms X., 1, 2.) Amen.

XX.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (1. Tim., I. 5).

Thus writes the Apostle Paul in the first epistle to Timothy, chapter one, verse five. In contrast with those who "give heed to fables, * * * which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," the apostle places before Timothy's eyes the end and the goal of all evangelical preaching, or of "the commandment." That toward which all tends in this preaching is "love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

The Gospel, as a power of God, is in condition to bring forth a complete tree, with root, trunk, and fruit. The fruit is, love out of a pure heart; the trunk is a good conscience; the root is faith unfeigned.

Let us look first at the fruit, for the tree is known by its fruit. The fruit of which the Lord Jesus and his apostles usually speak is charity, or *love*; and the apostle depicts it as love out of a pure heart. He does not mean by this

a sinless heart, but one that has been cleansed from sin and especially from every uncleanness that so easily mingles with love, the impurity of selfishness and self-love. This cannot foster nor allow a pure heart, but rather is at variance with and contends against it.

But such love can only spring forth where there is a good conscience. "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience."

A man can only get and have a good conscience by confessing his sins and seeking at the mercy seat cleansing and forgiveness in the blood of Christ.

If we are walking in the light, so that there is no guile in us, the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanses us from all sin, and our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience. Without this, we cannot love out of a pure heart. The evil conscience keeps a man bound, not only in his relation to God, but also to his neighbors; he is not freed from himself, that he may love. A good conscience is the trunk from which love springs forth.

But a good conscience is *rooted in Faith unfeigned*. Faith receives the blood of Christ for cleansing from sin. Faith sinks itself in the love of God in Christ Jesus; there it has its deep roots. We live by this love of God: "I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians II., 20.) Therefore this faith begets love, and works through it by a good conscience—bears the fruit of love.

If this, then, is the end of the commandment, the tree and the fruit that the Gospel will bring forth, you have good reason to examine yourselves, dear Christians, to see whether the Gospel that you have been hearing so long

has been able to bring forth this fruit in you; whether it has been able to produce such a character as the apostle here depicts. With this word before your mind and in your heart you must set on foot a sincere self-examination and ask yourself before God what is your condition in this respect. The Lord sees it; but as concerns the proofs of love, men also can see your walk. But that is not enough; you yourself must learn before all things to know your real heart condition.

What, then, is the character of your love? Do you love out of a pure heart those that belong to the Lord because they belong to the Lord, and love them the more, the nearer they are to him? Or do you love them because they pertain to you and cleave to you, and then only in the degree that they think like you and are similar to yourselves? And what of your love to your neighbors? Do you love them for the Lord's sake, for the sake of his precious blood with which he has redeemed all? Is it this that gives them worth in your eyes? Or is it something else, that is more important to you than that? Is your charity long-suffering and kind? Does it envy? does it vaunt itself? is it puffed up? does it seek its own? does it bear all things? does it endure all things? These are serious questions, surely fitted to illumine your heart and to reveal your character. Perhaps, dear Christian, no other love but that of self is to be found in you, even if this selfishness is clad in the garb of love, so that you even deceive yourself thereby; but you cannot deceive God.

Therefore let every impurity still in your love be brought to light and chastised by the Light, that you may cleanse yourself in obedience to the truth to an unstained

love. If the fruit is not right, the whole tree must be wrong.

Perhaps the fault lies in your conscience: have you a good conscience? Yes, you must go into your conscience, and there meet your God. But is your conscience also awake so that in it you can perceive your sins, and has the Holy Spirit access to it? Or have you an evil conscience in respect to some special sin, which you do not wish to give up or be rebuked for, which you may not confess? Or does your evil conscience come from the fact that your sins seem to you so many and so great that you cannot come with joyousness to the mercy seat which God has presented to you through faith in the blood of his Son?

This indicates that something is wrong with your faith, that it is not unfeigned, that you have not yielded yourself with your whole heart to grace alone; That you know much about faith, to be sure, and can talk eloquently of it, but yet have not really learned to have faith in your Saviour's atonement, and in the forgiveness of sins on the ground of this atonement. But how can your Christianity be sound when it has no root, or only very weak roots?

The roots must first be helped along if you are to be helped and brought to yourself. Such help can come to you through the holy communion, if you come to it with a heart thirsting and craving for help.

Here your faith can be succored. Here the grace of the Lord Jesus is placed before your eyes for the forgiveness of sins: "this is my blood, shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." So the Saviour here speaks to all who are weary and heavy laden. And therewith he will awaken and strengthen faith. Here is the earth into which

the roots of your faith are to strike in order to draw nourishment from it. In the forgiveness of sins you are to have your life; forgiveness of sins will furnish the life-power to you, if you continue in unfeigned and simple faith in your Saviour.

Here you can be helped to a good conscience. If you confess your sins, your heart will be sprinkled from an evil conscience. And this sprinkling of Christ's blood that cleanses your conscience also makes it tender, so that you are more sensitive to sin. The whiter the garment, the more easily are the smallest spots perceived upon it. If the Lord purge you with hyssop, that you may be clean, and wash you, that you may be whiter than snow (Psalms LI., 7), then the result will be that it will be all the more important to you to keep your robe white, so that you will hasten to confess your sins and to have them washed away in Jesus' blood.

But help is also to be lent to your love. It is to spring out of your faith and good conscience. With both of these, you are living in and by the love of your God and Saviour. Then this love of his will remain in you, and as it is pure, it can and will purify your love also.

But if the Lord thus comes to your help in the holy communion, and indeed with so powerful and gracious help, as his sacred body and blood afford, you must also be diligent in using this help, and in growing thereby. While you grow in faith it will come to pass that you will hold fast to the word of grace and to the promises which you have received, and so remain by faith in the love of God. Consider the journey to the cross carefully and follow it momentarily, so that you may ever and anon enter

into your rest and seek it again by intercourse with your Lord, and not be deprived of it through carelessness or indolence.

Guard your good conscience also with all diligence, and hasten, by immediate confession, to strip off all the impurity that will so easily cleave to you; be conscientious and of tender conscience.

And if the bud of love grows in your heart and the message resounds there, "Let us love him, because he first loved us," then guard this bud carefully, that it be not blasted, either by the selfishness of your own heart or by the loose love of the world. Be constrained by the love of Christ not to live for yourselves henceforth, but for him who died for you and rose again. Amen.

XXI.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

'Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.'" (Psalms LXII., 1.)

A more literal translation would be, "My soul seeketh her rest only in God: for from him cometh my help." The soul seeks rest. But where is it to be found? not in the world! How should this fleeting, unstable world with its eternal change, be able to give rest to a soul? The immortal soul can find no rest in the transitory; where can it give a place where the soul can find rest? and if it seek rest therein, it is of short duration. Where can we find quiet in the restless waves? Many a man seeks his rest

and his pleasure *in sin*; but has anyone found it there? Yes, for a moment, but not longer. For one is continually incited to new sins, from sin to sin, from anxiety to anxiety. No one can go on and say, "I have found rest in sin." But neither will rest be found *in yourselves*; for the natural heart is like a storm-tossed sea, that is never quiet. Your moods and feelings change every moment; if you rest in them one moment, they will drive you from rest the next. And your own works are as little able to give you rest as your moods and feelings. Even if they can for a moment raise you up in a certain self-indulgence, in the next—if your conscience is in any degree awake—they will plunge you into melancholy and despair.

In God alone is rest to be found. Our heart is created for God; therefore it finds its rest only in him. Yes, only in him; for he is the only eternal, unchangeable, faithful one. David calls him in this Psalm his rock, his defense, the rock of his strength. Therefore he alone can give rest. He can supply all things, he can fill up all gaps. He can be everything to you.

Accordingly, our soul must *seek* its rest in God. We must be converted to God, if we wish to find rest in God. How can you find rest in God if your heart is still attached to the world, to sin, and to your own *ego*. In vain will your heart that longs for rest seek it, if you are not willing to turn unto the Lord. How many complain that they find no rest, but do not care to be converted.

And not only once must such a conversion to God occur, if we are to find rest for our souls; no, it is necessary as often as our souls fall into disquiet. If our rest is to be found in God alone, it is also doubtless true that all dis-

quiet has its source in alienation from him. We have permitted ourselves to be drawn out into the world as we followed our own pleasures and desires—perhaps only a few steps; but at once disquiet entered in. Or it was some one sin that gained power over your soul, for example, anger, bitterness, pride, or something else pertaining to the carnal nature; but the result was again unrest and disturbance. Or we have allowed ourselves to be driven from the simple faith, from rest in the Lord and looking to him; cares, turbulent and disquieting cares, have thronged into our hearts and roused them to tumult; we turn our glance away from him and his grace, to look upon ourselves and our wretchedness; and thus was the rest of our souls disturbed.

How often this happens! But however often it occurs, the only way to rest is to turn to the Lord. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" (Psalms CXVI., 7.) The sooner such a return takes place, the sooner will we find our rest again; the longer we delay, the longer will our souls continue to be disquieted.

But how can a soul find rest in God? David says, "From him cometh my help." If that were not the case, how could we seek him, much less find our rest in him? we would meet his holiness and righteousness unexpectedly, and be repelled by them. Instead of this he comes with his help to meet him who comes like the prodigal son. He comes to meet the convert as the father met the prodigal son. He comes with his help; he comes as the Saviour. And this help consists in the first place in the forgiveness of sins which we confess to him, so that they are no more in the way of our approach to him, and no more hinder our rest, the rest that forgiveness bestows, the rest of sins forgiven.

But not only that: if it is sin that causes our unrest, then we cannot be freed from the disquiet without also first being freed from the sin. We must be freed from it; and from the Lord, not from ourselves, cometh our help. Harassing foes may go with us even to the altar, but there the Lord awaits us with his help. There the Saviour comes to meet us; there we hear his voice even to-day: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Yes, at the holy communion we may say in a very special sense, "from the Lord cometh my salvation;" yes, even: "here the Lord brings us his help; the Lord comes here, that my soul may seek its rest in him. 'My soul, wait thou only upon God.'" We need nothing but him, in order to find rest; only in his righteousness will the sinner find rest. Only in his strength will he find rest from his foes, in the midst of his weakness. In his care—for "he careth for us"—the soul harassed by sorrow finds rest. In him, as in a fortress and a tower, we find rest from restless and disquieting thoughts. To be sure, the guilt and corruption of our hearts may assail and trouble us on the one hand, and divers thoughts and sorrows of various sorts on the other, like enemies before a fortress; but if we abide in the Lord, if we seek shelter under the shadow of his wings, we need not want for rest; only do not permit yourselves to be terrified by the foe, or to be enticed from the fortress. He will defend you from lust and fear. Allurements and seductions of various forms are the foes against which we must be on our guard; the Lord will defend us from them. And does he not come for this reason with

help in his holy communion, to protect us in his communion?

But this message of comfort, that our souls can find rest in God alone, is also a summons to earnest self-examination. Yes, this "only in God" will as it were shine through your heart, proving and searching whether you seek your rest anywhere but in the Lord. "Only in God" becomes a light that lightens your heart and searches through you to see whether you are seeking your heart's desire here and there, outside of God; whether you foster in your heart a worldly and sinful nature, or whether you continue to depend upon yourself, in self-righteousness more or less gross. For all this only throws your soul into disquiet.

"Only in God." Let this word sink deep into your heart, that it may banish everything else, and free you from all that causes your soul unrest. "Only in God." It is a sermon exhorting to penitence, which should ring in your ears and lure forth a penitent confession of sin. Then seek your soul's rest only in God! and you will find it with him. Permit yourselves to be hidden in his pavilion and in the secret of his tabernacle. "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat." (Isaiah XXV., 4). His name is a strong tower; run in to it and be safe, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Amen.

XXII.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” (II. Corinthians V., 15.)

Christ died for all—that is the one all-embracing proclamation, the source of all that pertains to life and godly conversation. It is this, too, that brings the disciples of the Lord together around his altar. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death”—that Christ died for all. And it is to be shown “till he come.”

And why then did he die for all? “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

When the apostle says, “they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto God,” he expresses at once what kind of a life we live when left to ourselves, and what kind of a life that is to which we are called on the ground of Jesus’ death.

The life that we live by nature is a selfish life. We are not only selfish in this or that respect, but we *live* unto ourselves, our whole life is selfish; it revolves about itself, it has the *ego* as its starting point and its end, it is dominated by self. It is our *ego* that lives, and from it proceed all the other issues of life. This life of selfishness can take as many forms as there are different types of men, in station, ability and external condition; it can take the most gross and striking forms of open godlessness; but it can also

clothe itself in the finest garments woven by vain piety. Therefore, no one but the Lord and his Spirit can correctly recognize the life of selfishness in a man.

The life to which the Lord Jesus has called us by his death is called by the apostle, life "unto him." In this life, Jesus Christ takes the place formerly occupied by our own *ego*. Therefore Paul says, in Galatians II., 20: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As living to ourselves means not only having our own interests in mind in this or that matter, but having ourselves as center, so that the whole life relates to self; so also living unto Christ means not only being governed by him or having him in mind in this or that matter, or even in many things; but it means that he is the center of our lives, that they are governed by him and have their end in him. He has taken the place in my heart and life formerly occupied by my *ego*: henceforth "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

It was the purpose of his death to bring about this life. It is said in the first place that he has freed us from the life of self by his death. "He died unto sin once." He died for sin, consequently not least for the sin of selfishness. In his life and in his death he has transformed the life of selfishness in the love that seeketh not its own. And when a man is ready to give up self and through faith to die unto himself, he gains the life in Christ. Then he may say, "Christ is my life," or literally, "the life of Christ is mine." But when the apostle says that Christ died that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Christ, he wishes also to say that the new life *must* unfold: that is the ultimate purpose of his death. It is not something that *may* occur merely, on the ground of his death;

it is something that *must* happen, if his death is not to be in vain for us.

The obligation to live unto the Lord is in the words, "but live unto him which died for them, and rose again." Who has greater claim upon us than he? There is no greater claim than that we should give, not a part, but our entire life to anyone, should live for him; and the Lord has this claim on us. But it is not too great; for did he not die and rise again for us? Has he not dedicated to us his whole life on earth, even unto death, and also his heavenly life at the right hand of the Father? Therefore he does not ask too much; for this life of ours is after all no life, but a death. And if we come to the point of allowing him to give us life, we shall continually learn by experience that he gave us more than what he took, that so far as we are concerned it was not a loss, but a gain.

But in the words, "Which died for us, and rose again," there is also something more than the obligation not to live for ourselves, but for him. They wish to tell us how it is possible for a selfish man not to live unto himself. If we try to stand by ourselves and by what we can expect of ourselves, the mere thought of it, and still more the attempt to free ourselves, must cause us to exclaim, "with man it is impossible." For how is it conceivable that a new life should spring forth from my life in selfishness, or from my *ego* ruled by self? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Nothing that goes out from me, from my own strength and endeavors, can bring into being a new life. All attempts to this end must end with the confession, "with man it is impossible." Therefore we are directed to another starting point, to another fountain, in

which we must die to self, not only first or once, but for all time, for our whole life. And this fountain is opened in the words, "which died for us, and rose again." They point us to Christ, to his death and resurrection, to him who not only died for all, but who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews VII., 25). It is he who gives the new life; it gushes forth from the power of his death and resurrection. Yes, he not only gives it, but it is so inseparable from him that it must be said of us who have received it, "the life of Christ is mine." He is my life; I have life because I have him. "He that hath the Son hath life." And then we may not only say, "with man it is impossible," but also, "with God all things are possible."

And because it is the Lord Jesus Christ alone who by the power of his death and resurrection can bring us into that life in which we live unto him, the heavenly life, of whom it is said, "in that he liveth, he liveth unto God"—therefore, we say, he comes to us also in the holy communion. There he opens to us the fount from which flows all that pertains to life and godly conduct, for all those who open their hearts to him. Here in the communion he manifests the power of his divinity. Here he bestows the fruits of his death and resurrection in their complete fulness. For the words we listen to here are not the words of men; it is the Lord himself who speaks and says, "This is my body, which is given for you; this is the new testament in my blood, shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." In effect he says, "I am here, here I give myself to you, I, who died and rose again for you." So the

Lord stands here, ready to come to you with all that he is and has and can do for you and give to you—what you are not, and have not, and cannot do. Praised be his name.

Now, how will you receive him? What must you think, especially in the light of this, "that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again?"

You should examine your heart and life, to see whether it is a life for yourself. It is so, if you have not permitted the Lord to make you a new creature. You cannot dismiss this question too rashly. Of yourself you cannot decide it. You must let the Spirit of God tell you whether your own *ego* is still the center of your being as its all-directing and governing power; and you must be sincere in it. If you have an honest desire to know your real condition it will not remain hidden from you. Then if you see that with all your piety you have hitherto been living only for self, lament and confess to the Lord, that he may show you mercy. He will not wait until you free yourself from yourself. He waits and asks for nothing but that you give up self in the depths of your heart, and then shut yourself up in the depths of your heart with him who died and rose again for you. You should consider this well, if you are intersted in living no more unto yourself. Even he who has agreed to that giving up of himself which is involved in the receiving of the Lord Jesus in faith—for only in this way can one give himself up—is often brought face to face with a "not for yourself, but for Christ." The selfish nature that still manifests itself in a disciple of Jesus, if not in the center of his being, at least on its circumference, if not in spirit, at least in the flesh—this selfish nature comes to

light many times and is brought to light by the Spirit of God. For it is important that he recognize it for what it is; it is important that he be prepared to give it up; but it is no less important that he does not seek to overcome it in his own strength. That would be a new expression of selfishness; it would not lead toward the goal. No, it is a matter of sinking one's self again in Christ's death for all, in order to die therein. If my own life will not die, then I will strengthen my will to put it to death, as I consider that Christ died that I need no longer live unto myself. If I *desire* to die, but know not how to bring it about, I will shelter myself in the thought, He died for me and rose again. And if it becomes difficult for me to see my way, he will come and envelop me in the power of his love and death—by means of the holy communion.

Yes, dear soul, that "not to live for ourselves" cuts in deeply. How it gains ground with its searching light! How much it demands! How much sin it reveals, which you must wash away in the blood of Jesus! How many shackles of selfishness will it reveal to you! But how much grace and redemption is likewise offered you by the Saviour who meets you here! There is mercy and plentiful redemption with him who died and rose again for you. Amen.

XXIII.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." (Hebrews XII., 15.)

In these words of the epistle to the Hebrews we have

also an echo of the Gospel for last Sunday (the parable of the ten virgins). For it teaches us nothing else than that we fall not from the grace of God. We are warned not to forfeit our entrance into the marriage hall. But if we are to enter, grace must prepare us for it; it can never happen because of our own deserts. But it is equally certain that the grace which we need in order to be made ready for the kingdom of God is at our command and is offered to us. The grace of God in Christ Jesus comprehends within itself everything we need to "be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Consequently, every thing depends upon this, "that no man fail of the grace of God."

The admonition not to fall from the grace of God not only indicates that there is such a grace, but also that it is offered to us. And we find this to be the case throughout our whole life. Every day that is bestowed upon us in this life is a day of grace, on which grace is offered us; a day granted in grace and destined to bring us something from the fulness of grace. And how his grace has come to meet us; how it has sought us out! Did it not come to you in the very beginning of your life in holy baptism? And has it not approached you through your whole life, calling, enlightening, warning and rousing, that it might then stand by you, consoling and soothing, delivering and helping you? How many opportunities for salvation have been given us by this grace! And it has stood behind the events of your life, even when you have not seen and marked its presence. The Lord has desired to prepare you for the reception of his grace. In sorrow and distress, in disappointments and afflictions, in sickness and calamity, grace was

knocking at your heart. And as often as God's Word came to your ears, grace was proffered you.

And how many effects of divine grace have you experienced! How often has the Holy Spirit called you and moved your heart! How many admonitions and warnings have been given you by grace! How often, when you sought it, has it anticipated you, and consoled and revived your heart.

That was grace, the grace of Jesus Christ: and what is not included in it? It can not be told nor expressed in words. It comprehends everything that the sinner needs in order to be saved. It forgives all sin, and heals all frailties. It calls and perfects. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans VIII., 30.) "The God of all grace will also, through this grace, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (I. Peter V., 10). Through this grace is also "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II. Peter I., 3). "For by grace are ye saved" (Ephesians II., 8): so it offers all that man needs to be saved. More cannot be said of the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" through Jesus Christ (Romans V., 17).

If then a man is not saved, if he does not become just and noble, it can only be because he has failed of the grace of God. And if anyone fails at last of the salvation he has expected, it is simply because he has fallen from the grace of God.

Yes, what a significant expression is that—"fail of the grace of God"; neglect baptismal grace from one's baptism

on, throughout life! neglect the call of mercy, so that we do not regard the grace which we might have obtained! Fail to hear the call of grace, so that we do not hear its voice, nor let it lead us to a right use of God's Word, nor open our hearts to it! Neglect the enlightening, correcting grace, so that we do not have a godly sorrow for sin; fail of the consoling and forgiving grace, so that we do not come to peace! Neglect the saving grace, so that we are not able to learn its power for the destroying of sin and the renewing of the mind. What neglect! What is its cause?

Can we wonder that the apostle cries, "look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God?" Do we not say to ourselves and to each other, "beware of neglecting this or that," even in earthly things, in temporal gains and losses? How anxious we are that no such neglect be blamed to us. How we reproach ourselves and others when by neglect we bring down upon ourselves an important mischief or injury, or let slip an opportunity for gain! And should we not hear the call, "look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God?" Yes, here it is necessary for us to see to it and take heed if we are not to receive condemnation to our souls and lose an unspeakable and eternal prize. For a time is coming when we can no longer make amends for our neglect. This hour has not yet come for us, "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews II., 1).

That this grace of God is still open to us is shown by the fact that we may still assemble at this hour according to God's Word, to go to his holy table. This is a great grace; that it is not past, is due to God's grace alone. It is

the goodness of God that we are not entirely undone, and his mercy is without end. God in grace still gives you an hour of grace, because he desires to prove his grace to you. And if it is a great grace that he is willing to see you and to speak with you, it is a still greater grace that he is willing to open the way to the gracious treasures of your Saviour and his reconciling and redeeming grace. And he does this in the holy communion. According to the words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins," you are promised in this sacrament "forgiveness of sins, life and salvation." Therefore see to it that no man fail of this grace of God.

If you have stopped with the Lord and thought over your spiritual condition and the attitude of your heart, in the light of God's Word, you cannot deny that you for your part have neglected much of God's grace. For even if by grace you have become a follower of Jesus, it does not follow that you have made use of all the grace that was at your command. For if you had not failed of all this grace, would you not be quite different from what you are? If you had not neglected it, would you not be much nearer the Lord, much more like him? Could not the great grace that has fallen to your lot have awakened in you a stronger faith, a more active love, more patience and a more heavenly mind? You must know and confess this. Then since reconciling grace is still open to you, do not neglect it! "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I. John I., 9). Consequently, you may here expect not only the grace of forgiveness, but also the grace that cleanses from all unrighteousness. Your Saviour meets

you here with all his blessings, with all his saving grace. See that you do not fail of them! This grace will warn you to keep watch upon yourself; it will often take you to quiet and collect your heart before the Lord. Neglect not the impulse and the warning, or you will lose a spiritual good. In his grace and through the spirit of prayer the Lord will invite and impel you to prayer. Then do not, because of indolence and compliance with the natural corruption of your heart, neglect to draw near to the Lord, until he draws near to you. Through his Word and the operation of his Holy Spirit the Lord will place before your soul the riches of his grace. He will turn your eyes to the Crucified One and to all the grace that flows richly and plentifully from the cross. He will offer it to you and say, Take it; it is yours; it belongs to you. You may have faith in it, you may expect everything from it. See that you do not, in unbelief and the dilatoriness of your heart, neglect to lay hold on this grace and appropriate it to yourself. Be on your guard that you do not neglect, on account of your contradictory feelings and the objections of your reason, to take what the Lord in his grace wishes to bestow. The grace that bringeth salvation will teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this world; it will take you in strict control and show you the ungodliness and the worldly lusts that still have their root in you and tempt you. Fail not of this correcting grace! Bow beneath it, subject yourself to it. And if the Lord, who knows the depths of your heart as well as your words, warns and corrects you, whether for a bad emotion of the heart or an idle word, neglect not the grace of God! Accept the reproach, and seek help against

the sin that is reproved. And if the grace of God which will environ and attend you causes you to feel in your conscience that you are not walking in love in your relation to your neighbors, that you have not loved him as yourself, then neglect not to learn of this grace what it has to teach you: to walk in love as Christ has loved you and given himself for you an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. And if the mind and life of your Saviour is placed before your eyes, be it through his Word or through the mind and life of a brother, and it is said, Be so minded, walk so—then neglect not this awakened grace. Follow it, abandon it not! and if you ask, “How shall I bring it to pass that I neglect not the grace of God?” then we answer, “Grace itself will teach you if you will guard it and permit yourself to be guarded by it.”

So see to it that no man fail of the grace of God on this day of salvation and at this communion table. We cannot call you by name; we cannot address you individually; but the Lord thinks of each. The Lord has his grace in readiness for each and every one of you. The Lord means you when he admonishes all “Let no man fail of the grace of God.” May none of you do so. May the Lord hear from each of you a confession of sin by which he can see that you do not wish to fail of God’s grace. Amen.

XXIV.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever.” (II. Peter III., 18).

With these words the Apostle Peter closes his second epistle. As he began the letter with the wish, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,” so growth in this grace is the last thing that he lays upon their hearts.

We cannot say to every man, “Grow in grace;” for such an injunction presupposes that one is no more ruled by self, but as the apostle says in his first epistle, stands in the true grace of God.

True, God has already placed us under grace and incorporated us with Christ by baptism. But we may have abandoned grace and taken root in another soil, in the world, and sin, and self. Most men live in this soil; from it they draw their nourishment by their lusts and desires; and so they grow indeed, but in selfishness, in sin, and in worldliness.

It requires much of the working of God's grace to transplant such a man to the soil of grace. The roots by which he has lived in sin and in the world must be pulled up. This occurs when his desires—for it is the desire of the heart that takes root—turn in contrition from the world and sin to God, and seeks and desires communion with him. But it is not enough that these roots be torn up, they must also have a new soil, “grace and the knowledge

of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And it causes the Lord much trouble and the soul much distress before a man turns with all the longing and trust of his heart, not only from sin and the world, but from *himself*. There the roots are deepest, there they are most firmly embedded. Only through faith does the soul reach the point where it lays hold on grace with the whole desire and trust of the heart, so that it may be said of it that it *stands* in grace and has its life therein, as the tree has its life in and from the soil in which it stands. And such faith springs up in the heart through knowledge of Jesus Christ, through the knowing him as he is.

Without such a transplanting, without this penitence and faith, a growth in grace is impossible. Where it is lacking, we grow ever deeper in the world and sin, or—if conditions are better—we are illumined by grace and let it work in us, but do not *stand* in grace; and when we do not stand in grace, neither can we grow in it.

Therefore, dear Christian, when you hear this message concerning growth in grace you should first prove yourself, whether the great change has taken place in you, whether your heart has been transplanted out of the world and sin and self, so that you no longer have your life and seek nourishment for your heart and life in the world, in sin, and in yourself, but in grace, or at least are striving to that end.

But when you have been transplanted into the soil of grace, the matter is not finished; when that has occurred, the admonition is given, “Grow in grace.” The tree must grow if it is to bear fruit. If we examine the context in which the words of our text occur, we find that it is pre-

ceded by another admonition to the readers of his epistle: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." The more a tree grows and becomes strong, the better it can resist storms. So it is also with the Christian. The storms of temptation, from within and without, do not cease nor abate. The Christian is always exposed to new temptations, has always new trials to pass through, for which he needs new strength and steadfastness: therefore he must grow.

But the tree must also grow if it is to bear fruit. Should not grace bear fruit? If a Christian is to grow in grace, he must bring forth fruit to the honor of God. For all fruit has the end in view "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ;" as also Peter says, "To him be glory both now and forever."

How is this growth to occur? "Grow in grace." The tree grows by sending out its roots and sinking them deeper, so as continually to draw more moisture and nourishment from the ground in which it stands. So the growth of the faithful is to occur: they are to sink the roots of their heart deeper and deeper into grace, and spread them wider and wider, so as to draw to themselves more and more of the riches, life and power of grace. It is to take place, not from without but from within, where the roots of our being lie; you are not to grow through or by yourself; not of your own strength, but in and through grace.

When the apostle not only says, "Grow in grace," but adds, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," he means to say that the grace in our Lord Jesus Christ is completed, and that growth in grace occurs

through growth in knowledge of him. To know him, is to know grace; to grow in knowledge of him, is to grow in grace. We are to learn better and better that he is *our* Lord and Saviour; all grace is included in this. The soul is continually to penetrate this knowledge deeper, and to appropriate for itself all that it includes and offers. Faith must enlarge in the richness of this knowledge if it is to appropriate saving grace in its whole compass. Thus do we grow.

But how comes it that the apostle admonishes us to grow in grace? Does not that occur of itself? Has man anything to do with it? To be sure. True, the powers of grace are to work in him, and "if by grace, then it is no more of works;" but yet this growth depends upon man; as in nature a good soil is not sufficient, but there must also be roots, living roots, to draw their nourishment from the earth. So it is here also: grace is there; but the roots of your heart must sink in it. And what are the roots of the heart? They are the innermost desire of the heart; this is our limitation. If it is directed toward the world and sin, you will grow in worldliness and sin; on the other hand, if it is directed toward the Lord and his grace, you will live and grow in grace. If this desire of yours is continually extended more fully, eagerly, and longingly toward grace—that is the essential thing if you are to grow in grace. You surely have sufficient reason for laying hold on God's grace with a desire that is ever more ardent. But you must first feel that, even if you have heartily turned to the Lord, all sorts of sinful desires are still in your corrupt nature, and that these are nothing but roots that seek their soil in sin and in the world. And how much self-seek-

ing is still in you! You must be freed from these desires, you must turn your heart from them. Moreover, you will probably perceive that, even if you cling to your Saviour with all your heart, you must still be strengthened by his spirit, in order to resist temptations, to stand against them, and to bring forth more fruit for the Lord. If this is to come to pass, you must lay hold on his grace, live in it and grow in it, that with ever fuller and more ardent desire for salvation you may appropriate all the good things that are in Christ Jesus. To this the Lord wishes to encourage you in this hour; and for this he offers in special degree his grace, the grace in which you are to grow, here in the holy communion. In it he opens up his grace in its complete fullness, so that you can sink into it, and it into you.

And is not the whole grace of God, that the Saviour has won and provided for you, extended to you here? His blood was given and shed for you, for the remission of sins. And is it not opened up before your heart, so that you need only take it in faith, as much as you wish and as far as the desire of your heart extends? "Our Lord and Saviour"—that is the end of the knowledge in which your heart is to live; in it all may be summed up. And you are here to receive this grace, this knowledge of Jesus Christ, not by your own plans and exertions—no, it is given you, it will give life and nourishment in the inmost depths of your being, where its deepest roots are concealed. For there the holy communion operates, supporting and dispensing life, that we may grow thereby. And then in faith and love you should implore grace to perform its work, and by meditation upon the Word of God expose your heart to the beams of the Sun of Grace. Then the Lord will receive all honor through the fruit which grace brings forth.

The Lord awaken and increase in all of you this hearty desire and this living faith in the grace of Jesus Christ; and let your hearts strike their roots deep in the Word of his grace and through his gracious communion. Amen.

XXV.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." (John XV., 9).

The Lord Jesus spoke these words on his departure from his disciples, in connection with what he had said previously of himself as the Vine and them as the branches. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." No man, but only the Son himself, could comprehend how the Father loved him, the only-begotten Son. But at any rate the Lord here places us before the holy of holies, even if a curtain still conceals it from us. Yet the Lord is not willing that we remain outside of his love, if we wish to be his disciples. No, he says, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." Thus he brings near to us the love of God in Christ. And it is an immeasurably great thing when he says, "so have I loved you." We can understand the Father's love for his holy, obedient son; but that the Saviour should love such sinful and unclean men as we, is a miracle that can be explained singly and alone by another miracle, *grace*. That is a wonder that none can comprehend.

He who has not yet perceived his sins and learned to prize the love of God, understands nothing of all this. It is not difficult for such a man to believe in God's love, or at least to talk as if he did, but it is empty talk, an imaginary faith. It is quite different with one who has caught a glimpse of the misery and corruption of his own heart. How much prayer and conflict it costs such a man before he can believe that God will be gracious to him, much less that God will love him! And yet it is this faith alone that gives life, as we may learn from the words of the Apostle Paul: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

So long as a man has not learned thus to believe in God's love, there is no possibility of continuing in love, as the Lord Jesus says, "continue ye in my love." We gather from the context that this does not mean our love to him, but his love to us: we are to continue in *his* love.

Now, what are we to understand by this continuing? This, that I hold fast in faith to his love for me, in spite of all my sin and unworthiness. For if his were not so gracious, I could never believe in it. It means ever anew to lay hold in faith on his love through the confession of my sins, to permit myself to be irradiated by it, to place myself under its influence. We say "to lay hold on his love in faith in the confession of my sins." He who desires to continue in his sins, to hold fast to them, can not have faith in Christ's love, for it is holy, and opposed to all sin. And this makes the great difference between men: not that some are worthy and others unworthy of his love; but that some wish to

be loved by him and to be freed from sin by his love, while others desire his love only that they may be quiet and remain as they are. It is not difficult for the latter to believe; it is entirely a selfish matter with them: but it costs the first much trouble to believe in this love.

But why does the Lord lay so great stress upon continuing in his love? Because the whole heart life and its manifestations depend upon this love. Jesus lives in his Father's love; it is his life; it is the fountain from which his life of love springs forth. For him, to give up this love would be to cease to exist. In and through the beloved Son this love of God reaches those who believe in him. "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John XVI., 27). "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." And as the Son lives in God's love, so also can we live only in Christ's love. It must be our element, the spring from which we draw, if we are not to wither and die. The Lord Jesus says, in the first part of the fifteenth chapter, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." When he now says, "Continue ye in my love," he shows that continuing in his love is that abiding in him, or that we cannot abide in him without continuing in his love. So your life depends entirely upon this; if you do not continue in God's love, you will remain dead, withered, impotent.

This continuing in Christ's love, however, has still another side. Jesus says in the next verse, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." He here points to his own relation to the Father. While

he remained in the Father's love he kept the Father's commandments, and he abode in the Father's love *by* keeping his commandments. By non-performance of the Father's commandments he would have separated himself from the Father's love, from the love element in which alone he could live.

But we are not to conceive that this mention of the keeping of the Father's commands directs us to another way opposed to the former, the way of works. No, it is said, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.' Consequently, it is a matter of continuing in the love of Jesus.

Now what are these commandments which we have to keep, and through whose keeping we are to abide in his love? The Lord continues, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (verse 11)—and that he might show us that such a keeping of his commandments is not difficult, not a burden imposed upon his followers, but something that is to prepare for them joy, a full joy—he continues, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (verse 12). Consequently, his commandment is not a new legal commandment, to exclude us from his love, but a loving commandment that will bring us into love. His commandments are thus summed up by John: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (I. John III., 23).

The keeping of his commandment of love is necessary to the abiding in the love of Jesus, because only thus can

we continue in the love-element, so to speak. All that is opposed to love is opposed to the Lord Jesus; all that is opposed to love, that hinders a continuing in his love, is something that is foreign to his love and that strives against it. "If ye keep my commandments—if ye love—ye shall abide in my love."

These are words of gracious invitation, but at the same time of earnest, holy examination. Yes, all our Christianity depends upon our abiding in the love of Jesus; on it depend all things that pertain to life and godliness. All the parting words of Jesus, yes, in reality all his words, have in mind this continuing in love. Even the holy communion points to it.

How could the Lord have shown his love better than by giving his life for your sins? And how could he better make you understand his love than by offering you his body, given in love, and his blood, shed in love? And how could he more graciously help you to comprehend this love on your part, than by coming to you in the holy communion? How else could you better learn to confess in faith, with the Apostle Paul, "He loved me and gave himself for me?" How could the Lord more graciously come to your aid, that you might lay hold of his love anew, after you have in some measure let it go and removed from it, than by coming to you again in the holy communion and saying, "Behold how I have loved you. Return now, after you have received my forgiveness, and continue in my love."

The holy communion is aimed at an abiding in this love through the keeping of his commandment of love. The Lord desires that all be partakers of one bread, and

members of one body, that they be united the one to the other in love through this, "As the Father hath loved you, so have I loved you." If you love the Lord Jesus—should not the fact that the Lord loves your brethren bring it about that you can and will love them also? And if the Lord Jesus imparts his love in the holy communion and bears witness in your hearts to the power of his love, should it not awaken in you a hearty desire to keep his commandments by abiding in love to the brethren? Is it not written in letters of fire over every communion table, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you?"

We must first of all pause and examine ourselves in the light of these words. They are well adapted to call forth earnest questions of conscience, as: "Have I lived in Jesus' love? have I continued in him? have I asked after him as after my life-element, as though I could not live without him? or have I been indifferent to his love? and if I have concerned myself about it, have I had faith in his love to me? or have I denied it in unbelief, and so outraged his grace and resisted it in feigned humility?" And further, "Have I continued in this love, or have I turned aside from it into unbelief, in order to be found in myself, in my own self, in *my* love of him? and have I continued in his love, so that I kept his commandment and loved my fellow-christians and brethren? or have I, by uncharitableness in thought and word, and in my whole relation to love, sinned and deviated from love, the element of love, the spring of love, from him who is love itself? By not continuing in love have I not hindered the Lord from showing *his* love? have I not often through uncharitableness deprived myself of the manifestation of his love?"

What is your reply to these questions? We think that it must be a crushing one, and must prostrate you in the dust. If this is the case, and you then long for his love, then behold once more these words shining above the Lord's table: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Then hasten to meet your Saviour with confession and apology; grasp, as well as you can, the hand that is here extended to you; believe in the love that he here brings to you; receive in faith the promise that he here renews, that he will forgive all your sins and love you again; and then continue in this love! Continue in it on the ground of his Word, his promises, his coming to you, even if you do not feel it. Two friends believe in their reciprocal love, even without perpetual tokens of love. So you, too, should believe in the love of Jesus on the ground of his Word and his whole relation to you, even if he does not favor you with blessed feelings.

But neither may you forget that the keeping of his commandment is necessary if you wish to remain in his love. This commandment includes not only faith in him, but also a walk in love. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." He sends this message home with you from the table of the Lord. And you need not go far without being put to the test whether you are in earnest about *abiding* in this commandment of love, or whether you have given it up. Take this message home with you—the Lord himself will go with you, and repeat it to you—take it with you and let your thoughts and words, your desires and acts be determined by it. It will watch over you like a guard and at the proper time warn you: "Now! Now take care that you do not injure love through

anger, envy, pride! Continue in my love! Flee from everything that is opposed to it!" Fix your eyes often upon that mirror, that mirror of love which the apostle holds up before you in I. Corinthians, chapter thirteen, when he says: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." And if you feel that you have not kept this commandment of love, confess it to God and ask forgiveness, that you turn not away from love, and thus from the Lord himself. Let no one nor anything draw you into doubt, but keep far from it; seek it again, otherwise you will perish. Lay hold on it anew, even if in deep shame over your failure in love, and guard yourself faithfully, that you be not lost through lack of love.

Surrender yourself to the Lord with all your heart, and say,

"Jesus, thy boundless love to me

No thought can reach, no tongue declare;

Oh, knit my thankful heart to Thee,

And reign without a rival there.

Oh, grant that nothing in my soul

May dwell, but Thy pure love alone!

Oh, may Thy love possess me whole!

My joy, my treasure, and my crown.

Unwearied, may I this pursue,

Dauntless to this high prize aspire;

Hourly within my soul renew

This holy flame, this heavenly fire.

Still let Thy love point out my way;
How wondrous things Thy love hath wrought!
Still lead me, lest I go astray:
Direct my word, inspire my thought.

In suff'ring be Thy love my peace,
In weakness be Thy love my power,
And when the storms of life shall cease,
Receive me in the trying hour."—Amen.

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